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Jalen Hurts
Lamar Jackson

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NFL

2025 PREVIEW

FROM THE EDITORS OF
TV GUIDE

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YOUR GUIDE TO NFL 2025

EVERY NEW NFL campaign starts the same way—with preparation and expectation. And the 106th NFL season will be no different. All 32 teams will hit the grid, while one of them, the Philadelphia Eagles, revels in its success. But not for long. It's all fun and games until somebody tweaks a knee. And in this special preview issue, we tackle all the preseason stories that matter most. Every team gets a deep dive that assesses where they were and where they hope to be, on the strength of coaches and top players. Also, you can celebrate the most astounding plays of 2024, consult our fantasy football guide to prep for your own league, read about the ugliest rivalries ever and circle the games that matter to you most, including the 20 can't-miss games, in our complete schedule. Then go watch—with this guide by your side!

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Last season was more exciting than ever—by leaps and bounds!—as these best-of moments prove.

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NFL Network's Brian Baldinger says yes...and no in this point-counterpoint.

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New regulations will alter how the game is played—and viewed.

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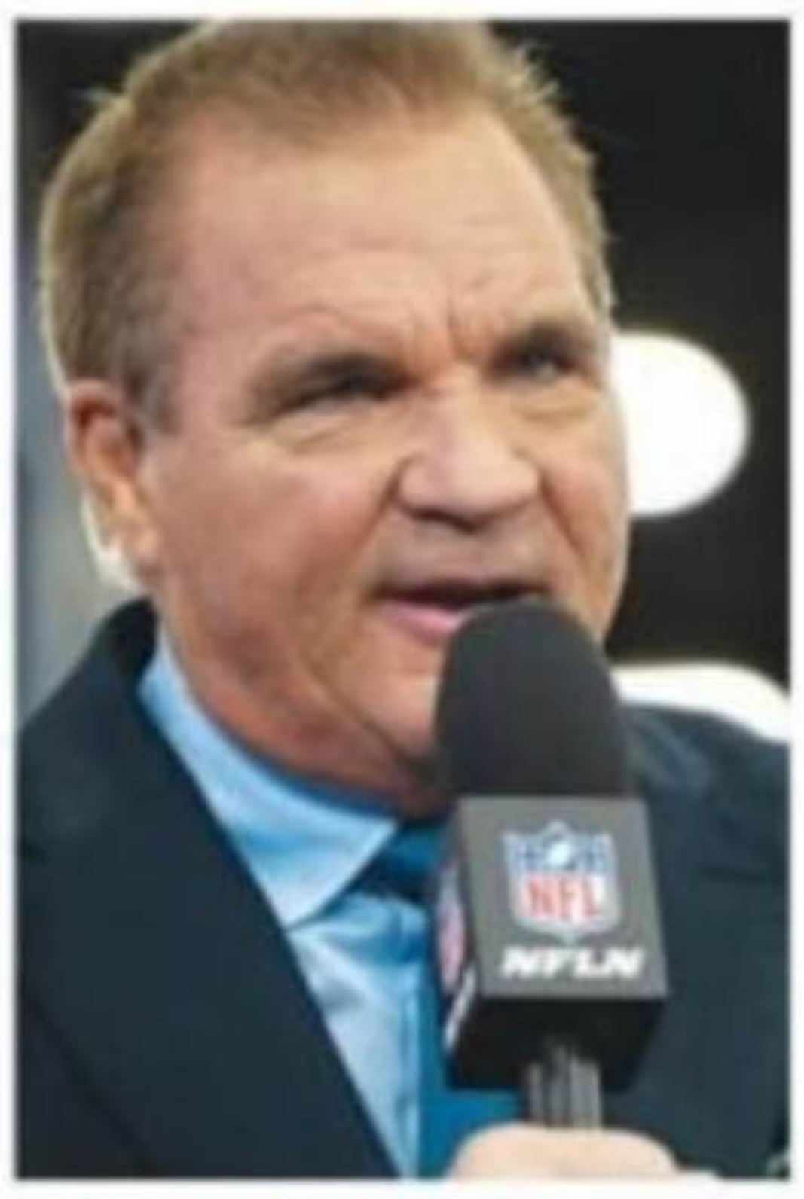
Packers–Bears, Bills–Chiefs, Ravens–Steelers, Jet–Patriots, Rams–49ers, *any* NFC East clash and much more.

NFL LOGOS: ADOBE STOCK. **COVER BACKGROUNDS:** AKSONOV/GETTY IMAGES
WEST COVER, FROM LEFT: AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES; MITCHELL LEFF/GETTY IMAGES; AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES
WEST BACK COVER, FROM LEFT: MADDIE MEYER/GETTY IMAGES; MITCHELL LEFF/GETTY IMAGES; KEVIN SABITUS/GETTY IMAGES; ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES; PERRY KNOTTS/GETTY IMAGES
CENTRAL COVER, FROM LEFT: COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES; JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES; PATRICK MCDERMOTT/GETTY IMAGES
CENTRAL BACK COVER, FROM LEFT: TODD ROSENBERG/GETTY IMAGES; NIC ANTAYA/GETTY IMAGES; JUSTIN K. ALLER/GETTY IMAGES (2)
EAST COVER, FROM LEFT: EZRA SHAW/GETTY IMAGES (2); RONALD MARTINEZ/GETTY IMAGES
EAST BACK COVER, FROM LEFT: ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES; AP PHOTO/JOHN FROSCHAUER; ELSA/GETTY IMAGES; BROOKE SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES

OUR EXPERT PANEL

Analysts from across the wide spectrum of television broadcasters weighed in on the strengths, weaknesses and 2025 prospects of each team in the league, giving special attention to top players and coaches.

BEN ARTHUR
Fox Sports



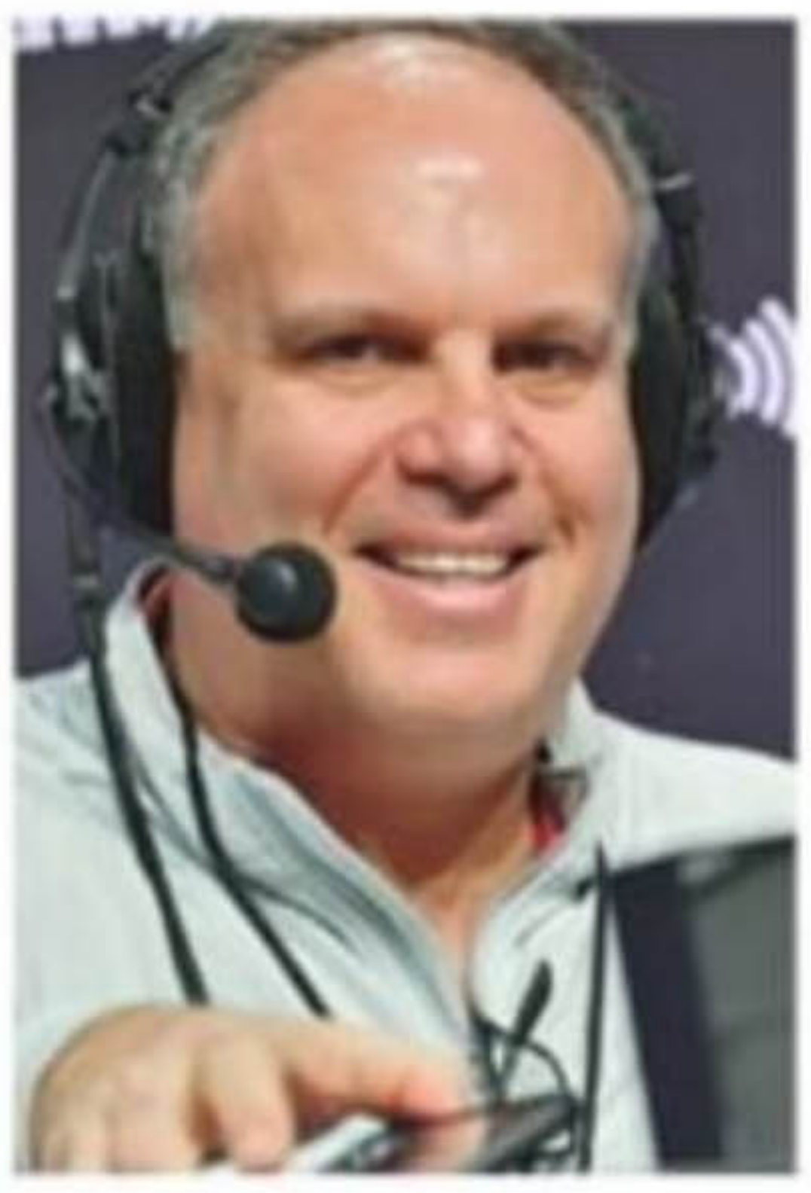
BRIAN BALDINGER
NFL Network

JASON GARRETT
NBC Sports

DAN GRAZIANO
ESPN

JEN HALE
Fox Sports

CHRIS MYERS
Fox Sports



MIKE TANNENBAUM
ESPN

AMY TRASK
CBS Sports

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: FOX SPORTS; LUKE HALES/GETTY IMAGES; ESPN; CHRIS WILLIAMS/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES; STEWART COOK/GETTY IMAGES; CINDY ORD/GETTY IMAGES FOR SIRIUSXM; KEN MURRAY/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES; CARMEN MANDATO/USFL/GETTY IMAGES

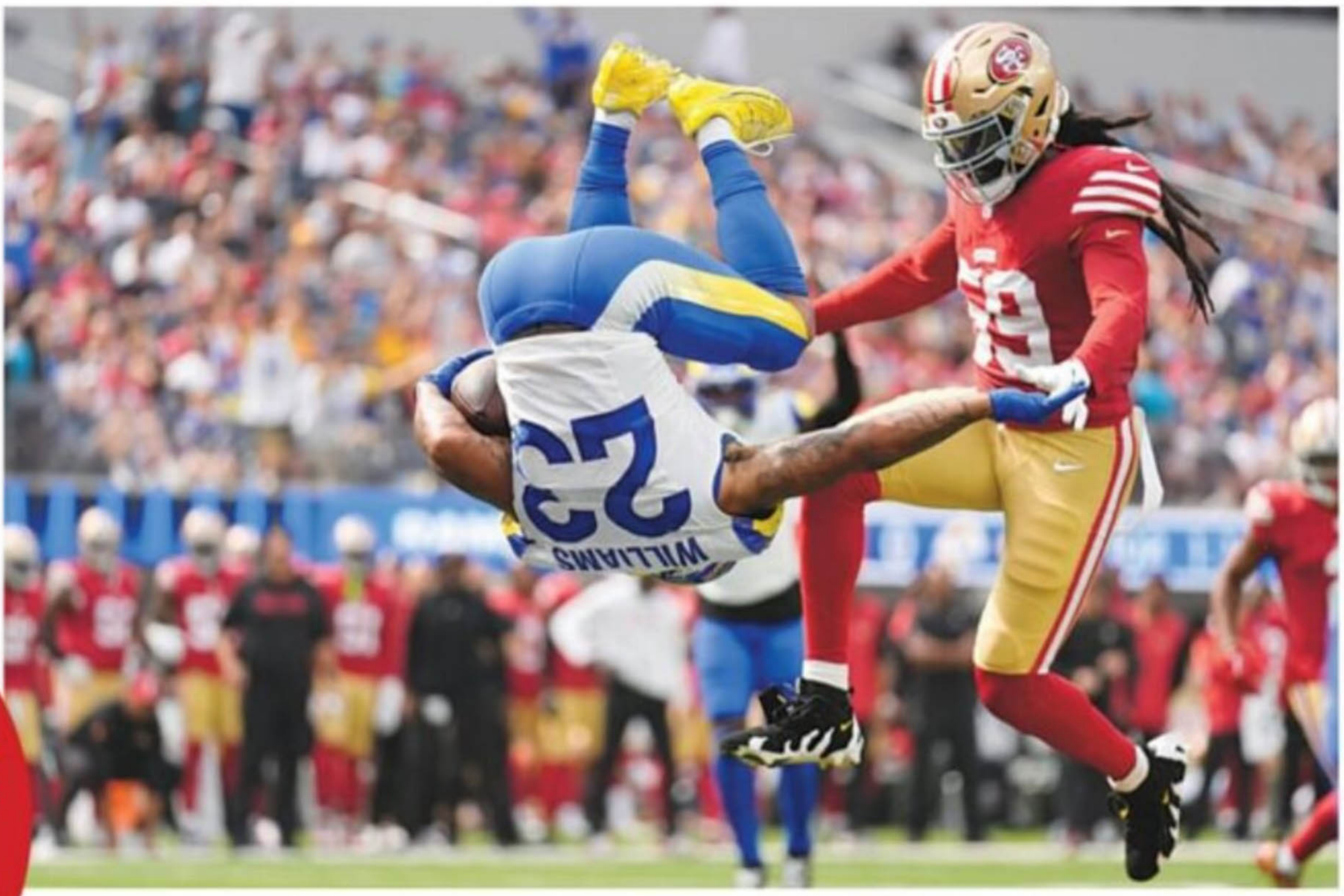
The lunges. The leaps. The dives. The flips. The Hail Mary to end all Hail Marys. And one big vault! Revisit the most exciting plays of the 2024 season, many of which turned the tide in great games.

SEPT. 22, 2024
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS
VS. LOS ANGELES RAMS

POWER PLAY

KYREN WILLIAMS GOES AIRBORNE IN FIRST OF THREE TDs

LOS ANGELES RAMS running back Kyren Williams scored 14 touchdowns last season, none more memorable than this Week 3 beauty. Catching a Matthew Stafford pass out of the backfield against the rival 49ers, he somersaulted over strong safety Talanoa Hufanga into the end zone to bring the Rams to within a TD in the first half. Williams was the sparkplug all day, rushing for two more touchdowns as the Rams came back to win their home opener 27–24.



FROM TOP: GREG TROTT VIA AP; AP PHOTO/ASHLEY LANDIS; PETER READ MILLER VIA AP

OCT. 27, 2024
CHICAGO BEARS
VS. WASHINGTON
COMMANDERS

POWER PLAY

ALL HAIL ROOKIE SENSATION JAYDEN DANIELS

IN THIS WEEK 8 thriller, Washington's standout QB Jayden Daniels continued an already fabled ascent that led to Offensive Rookie of the Year status. His team down by three points with 19 seconds left, and playing with a rib injury, Daniels scrambled for time and then threw a 52-yard Hail Mary bomb that Washington tight end Zach Ertz tipped into the waiting hands of WR Noah Brown (85, inset) for the winning TD. The hard loss derailed the Bears' season and started a 10-game losing streak.

OCT. 31, 2024
HOUSTON TEXANS
VS. NEW YORK JETS

POWER PLAY

GARRETT WILSON'S STICKY FINGERS SAVE THE DAY FOR THE JETS

HERE'S A GOOD question about wide receiver Garrett Wilson's Week 9 day against the Texans: Which one-handed catch made the highlight reel? Well, his first one, a 21-yard touchdown play in full stride tied the game at 7 in the third quarter, and it was a beaut. But it was Wilson's 26-yard, Nike "Jordan Jumpman" logo–like go-ahead grab at the back of the end zone in the fourth (left) that left viewers amazed. The Jets won the game, ending a five-game losing skid—a short respite in a bad season.

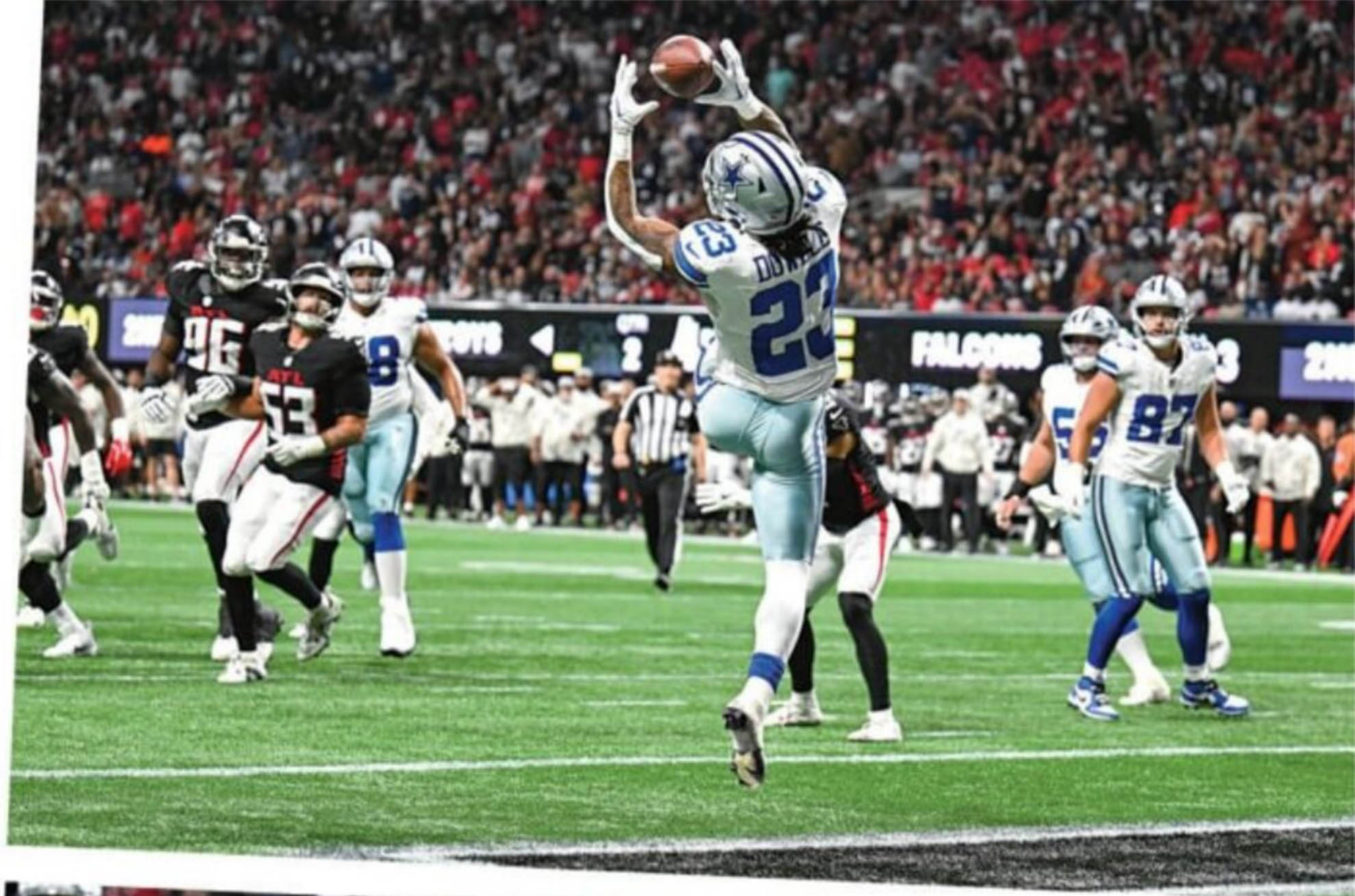
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SCOTT TAETSCH/GETTY IMAGES (2); KEVIN SABITUS/GETTY IMAGES

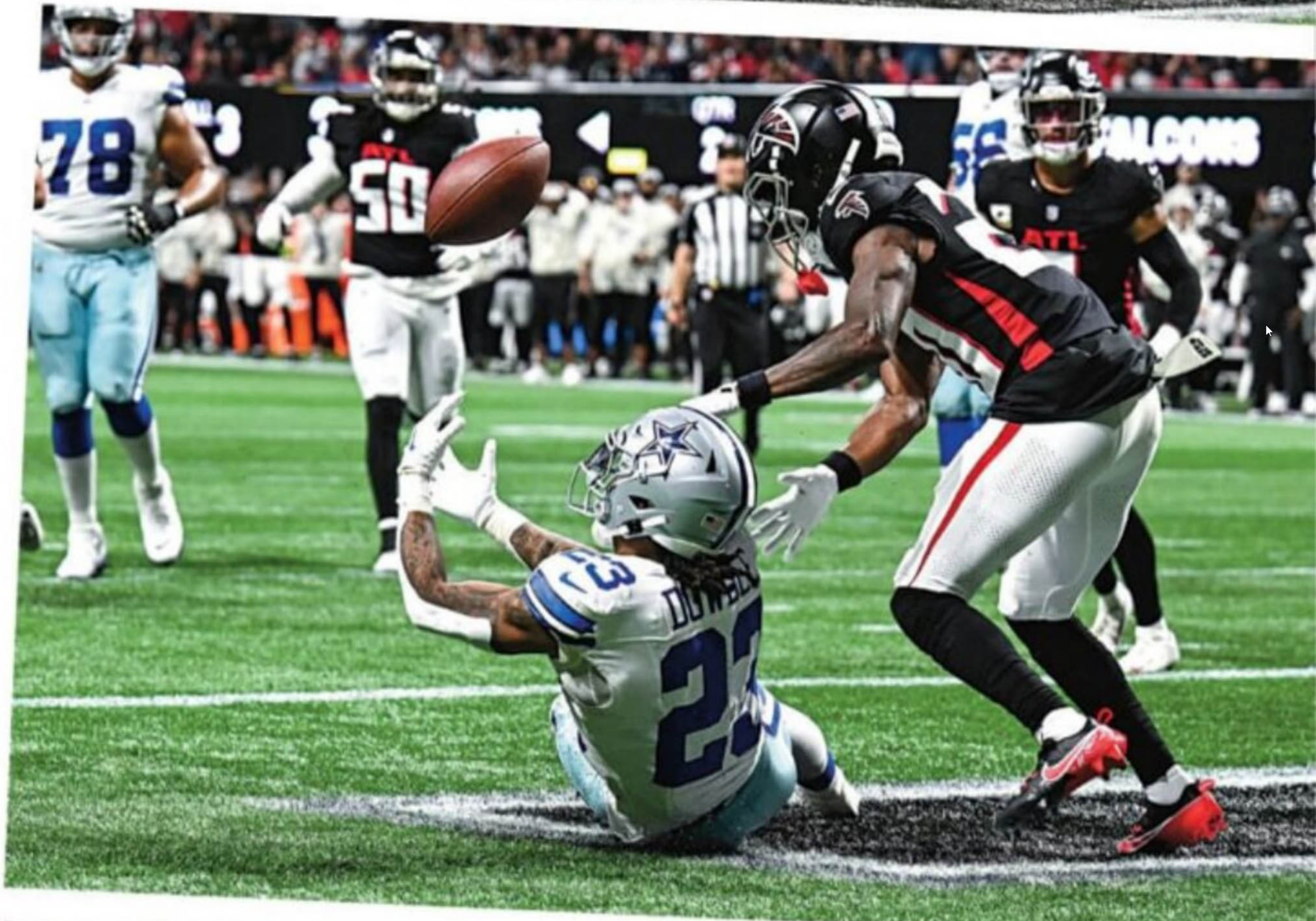
NOV. 3, 2024
DALLAS COWBOYS
VS. ATLANTA FALCONS

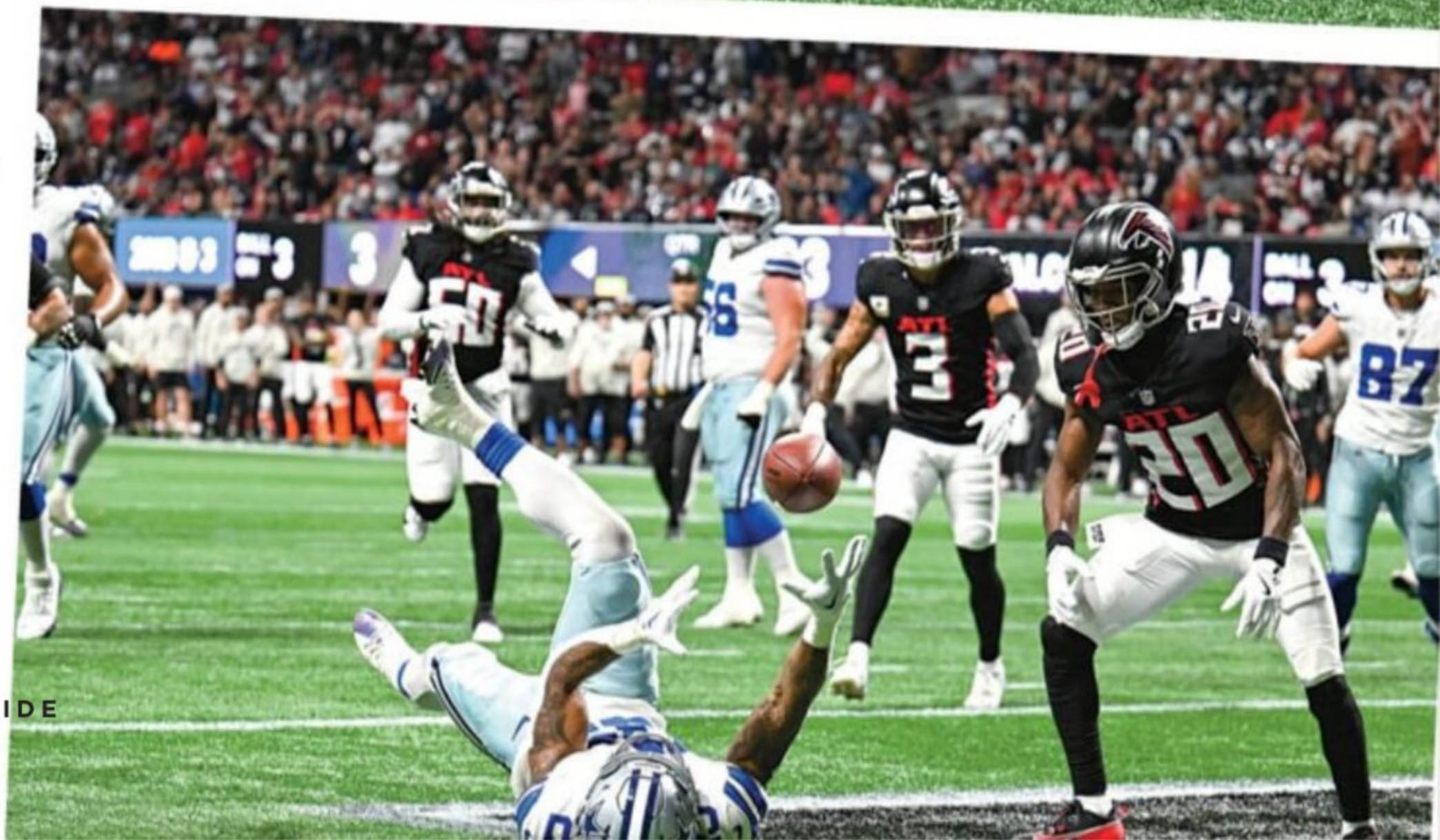
POWER PLAY

RICO DOWDLE'S JUGGLING ACT GIVES THE COWBOYS HOPE

THE 2024 SEASON was a dark one for the Cowboys, with QB Dak Prescott's Week 9 injury undoing an already subpar season. But earlier in that game, Prescott's impressive play led to a brilliant bit of football drama. With the team down by 11 in the first half and the ball on the 3, Prescott scrambled madly and finally tossed a quick one to running back Rico Dowdle, who bobbled the ball, collided with Falcon's CB Dee Alford (20), fell and caught the TD laying on the turf. The 'Boys ultimately lost, but this was a top moment.







RICH VON BIBERSTEIN/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES (3)

NOV. 3, 2024
PHILADELPHIA EAGLES
VS. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

POWER PLAY

THE PLAYER OF THE YEAR MAKES THE PLAY OF THE YEAR

IS THERE A photo that would do this play justice? Even the folks who put together the *Madden NFL 26* game couldn't imagine a better image. Early in the second quarter of this Week 9 matchup against Jacksonville, the 5–2 Eagles faced a third-and-6. QB Jalen Hurts tossed a quick screen to Saquon Barkley, who broke two tackles and then, with a kind of balletic force, spun around and vaulted backward over CB Jarrian Jones (22) to get the first down. As Jones later said, "That play was fire to me." The Eagles won the game 28–23 on their way to a Super Bowl victory. Barkley rushed for over 2,000 yards and won Offensive Player of the Year.

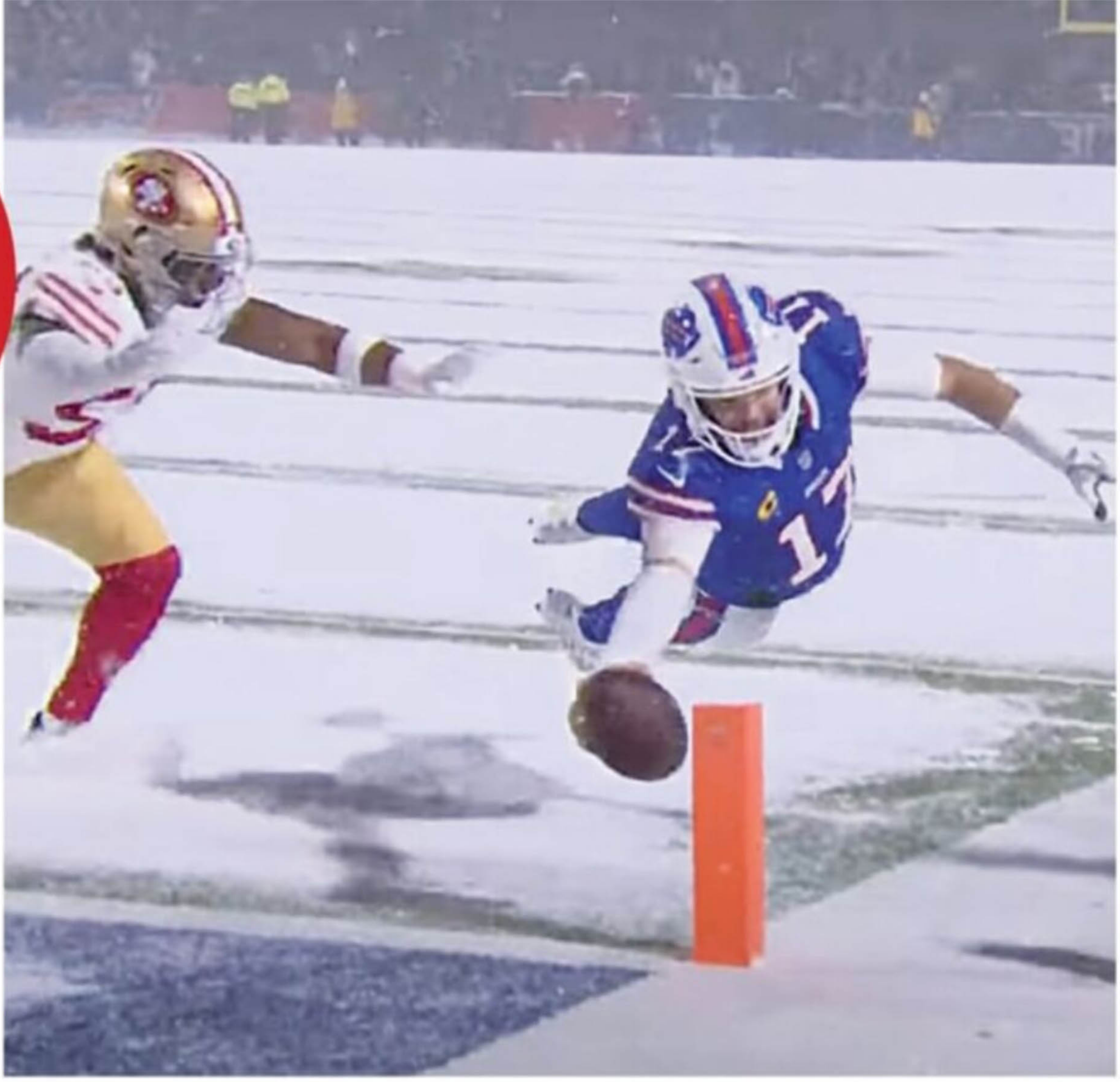
ANDY LEWIS/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES

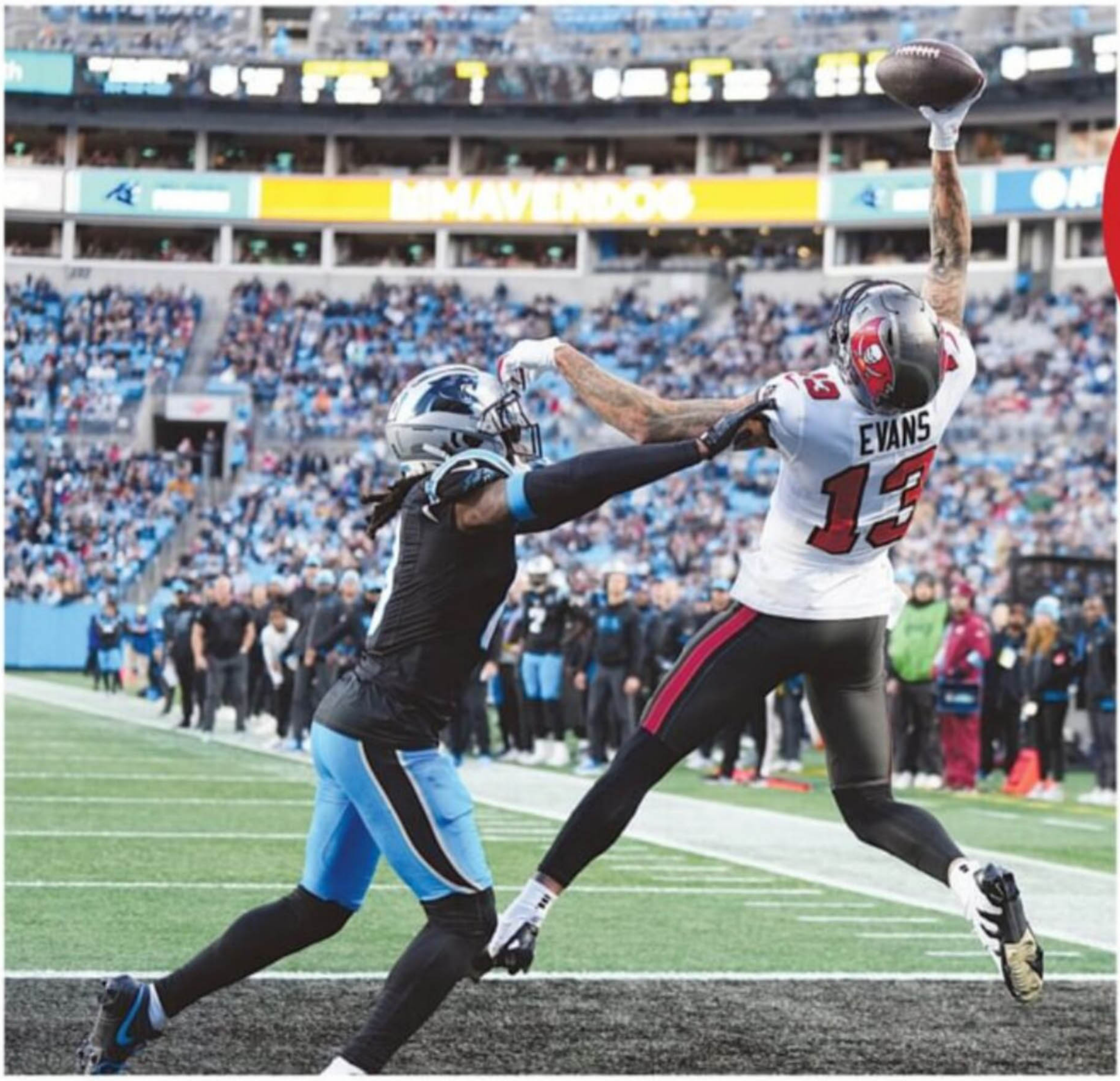
DEC. 1, 2024
BUFFALO BILLS
VS. SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

POWER PLAY

ALLEN GIVES THE 49ERS
A REAL DUSTING IN
SNOWY BUFFALO

“COME ON! THAT didn’t just happen!” yelled Cris Collinsworth from the TV booth, watching the replay of this spectacular diving TD. During the third quarter of a snowy Week 13 game, Bills QB Josh Allen tossed a first-and-goal pass behind WR Amari Cooper. Cooper bobbled but caught it and, as he was being brought down, tossed it back to Allen, who lunged and smacked the ball against the end zone pylon. The Bills won 35–10 in a year where Allen earned his first MVP award.





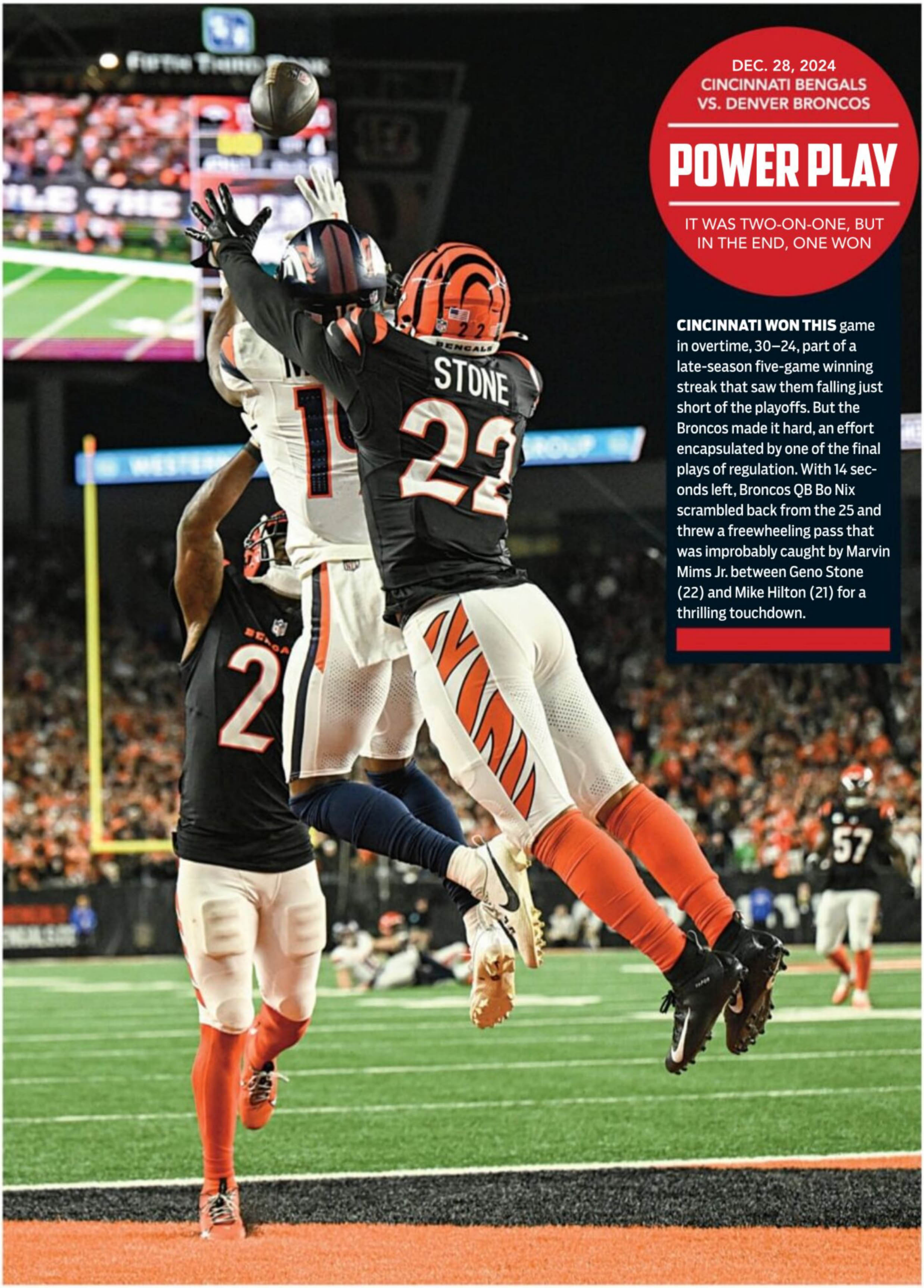
DEC. 1, 2024
TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS
VS. CAROLINA PANTHERS

POWER PLAY

MIKE EVANS MAKES THE
ONE-HANDER LOOK EASY
FOR THE BUCS

THE BUCS WON six of their last seven games, turning a losing season into a playoff berth, and in many ways, the tide truly turned with this Week 13 contest, won 26–23 in overtime over the division-rival Panthers. In a game that featured two one-handed grabs, the more significant of them came early in the first quarter, with a 2-yard TD from quarterback Baker Mayfield to reliable 6-foot-5 wide receiver Mike Evans, who snagged a beautiful floater over CB Jaycee Horn to give Tampa Bay an early lead.

TOP: SCREENGRAB COURTESY OF NBC. BOTTOM: MATT KELLEY/GETTY IMAGES



DEC. 28, 2024
CINCINNATI BENGALS
VS. DENVER BRONCOS

POWER PLAY

IT WAS TWO-ON-ONE, BUT IN THE END, ONE WON

CINCINNATI WON THIS game in overtime, 30–24, part of a late-season five-game winning streak that saw them falling just short of the playoffs. But the Broncos made it hard, an effort encapsulated by one of the final plays of regulation. With 14 seconds left, Broncos QB Bo Nix scrambled back from the 25 and threw a freewheeling pass that was improbably caught by Marvin Mims Jr. between Geno Stone (22) and Mike Hilton (21) for a thrilling touchdown.

AARON ONTIVEROZ/THE DENVER POST

JAN. 13, 2025
LOS ANGELES RAMS
VS. MINNESOTA VIKINGS

POWER PLAY

RAMS GIVE VIKINGS CHAPTER AND VERSE ON WHY THEY DESERVED THE WIN

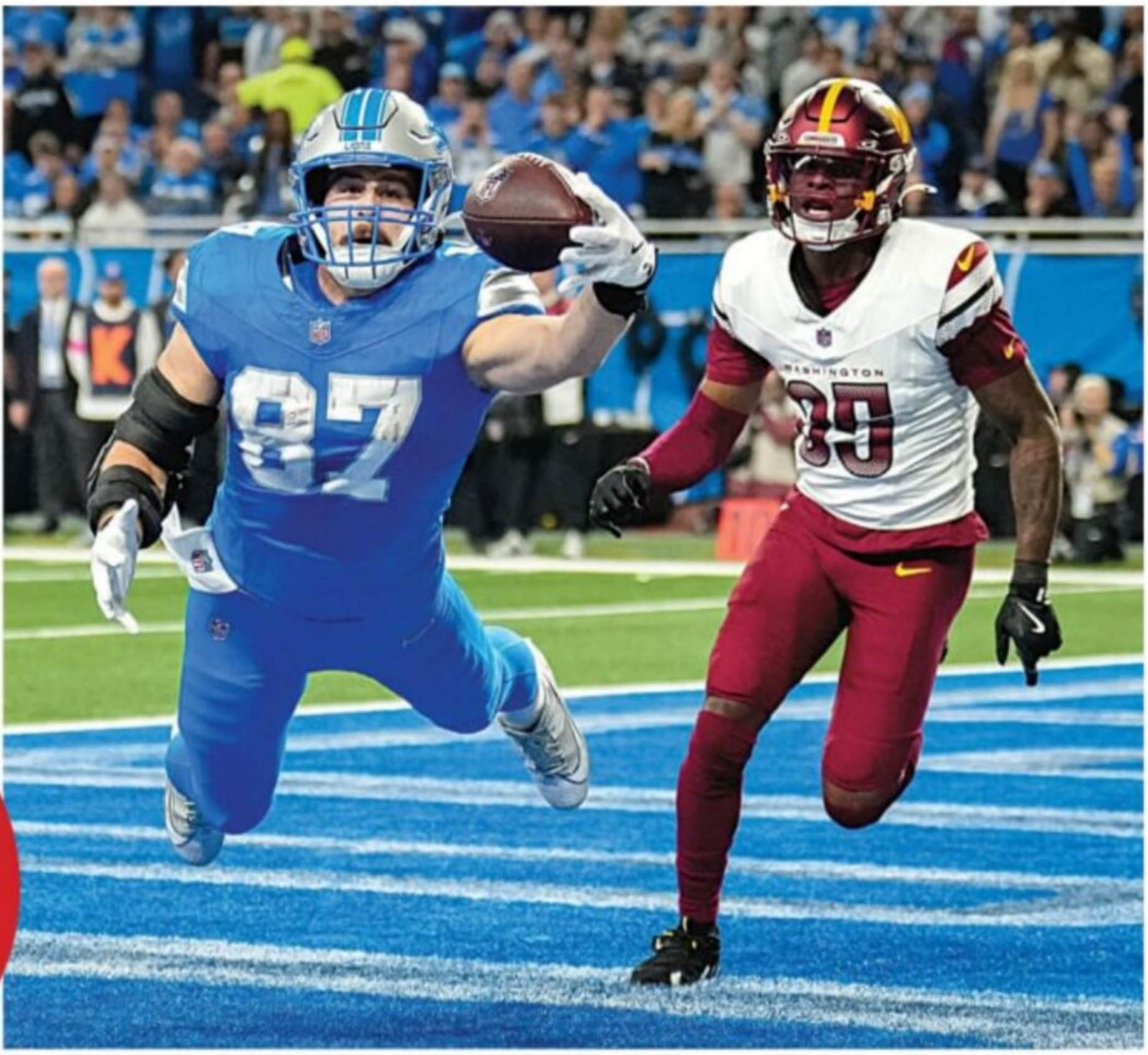
THE MINNESOTA VIKINGS amassed a 14–3 record in 2024 and entertained hopes of a nice playoff run. Their wild-card game opponent? The Los Angeles Rams, West division champs with a 10–7 record. And true, a game is never over until the gun sounds, but the Vikes looked plenty deflated with less than five minutes to go in the first half when quarterback Sam Darnold's fumble was picked up by linebacker Jared Verse, who took it 57 yards for a flippin' touchdown and a two-score lead. The Rams won the game 27–9.

WALLY SKALIJ/LOS ANGELES TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES

JAN. 18, 2025
WASHINGTON COMMANDERS
VS. DETROIT LIONS

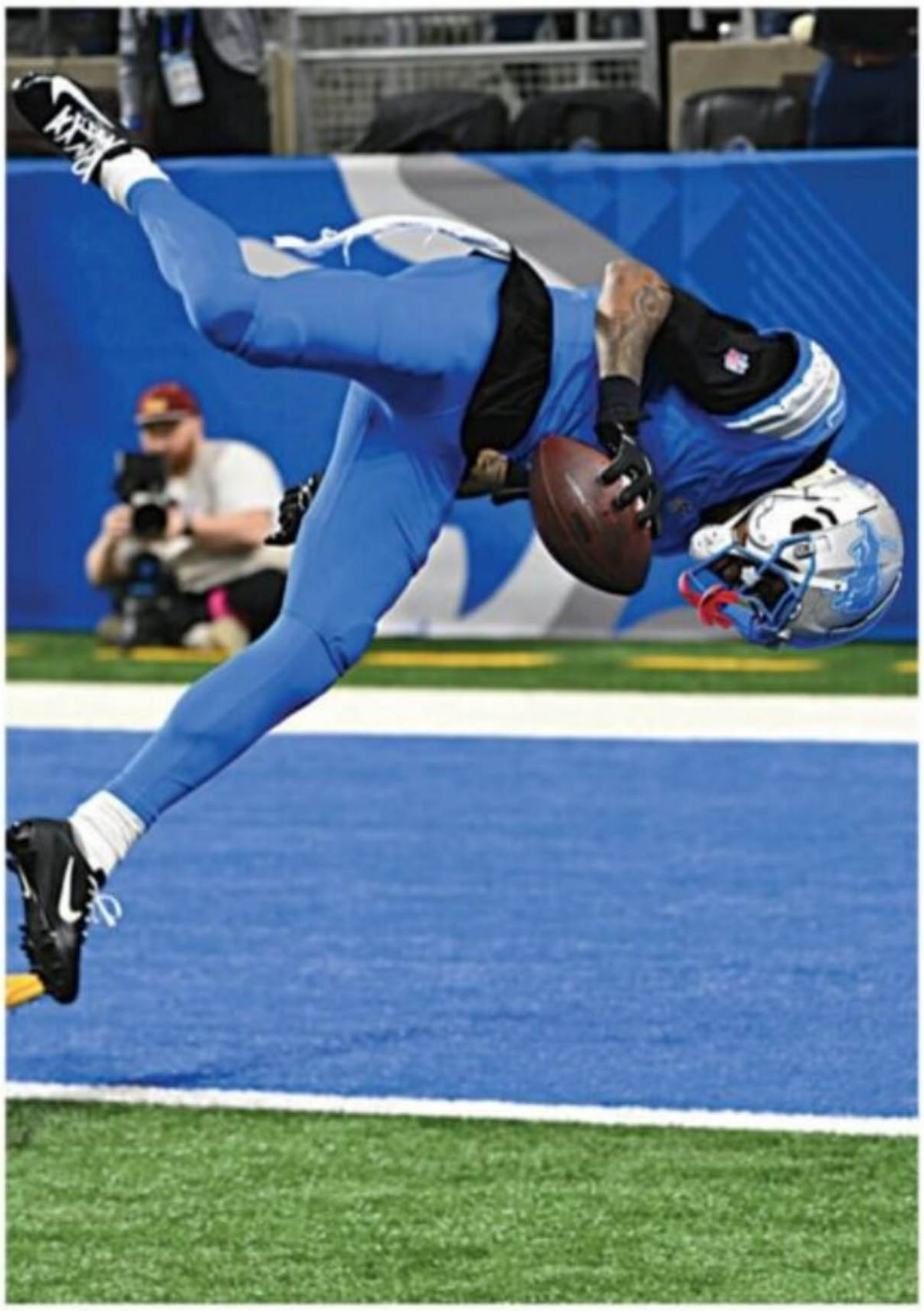
POWER PLAY

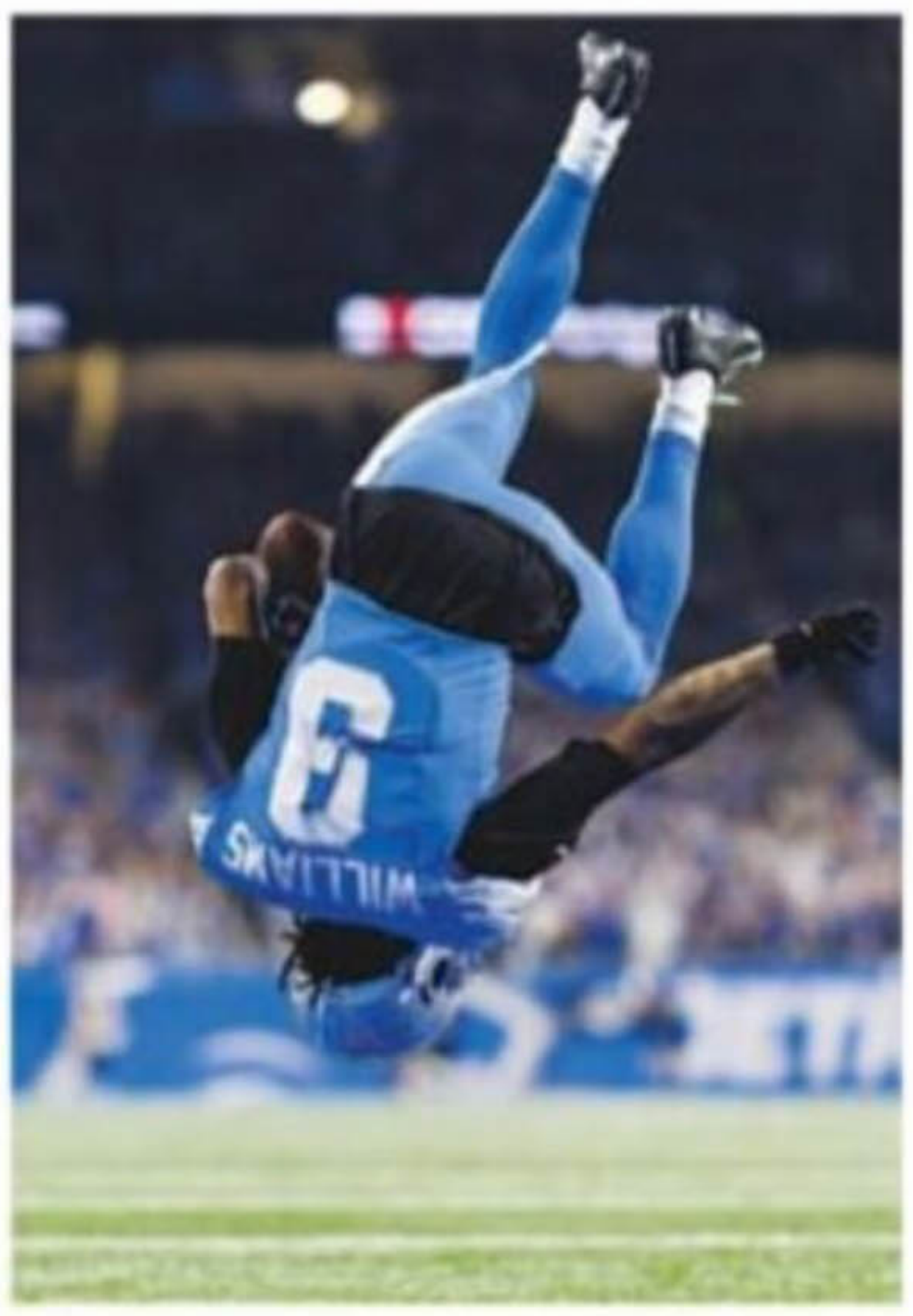
DETROIT PULLS OUT ALL THE STOPS, WASHINGTON PULLS OUT THE VICTORY

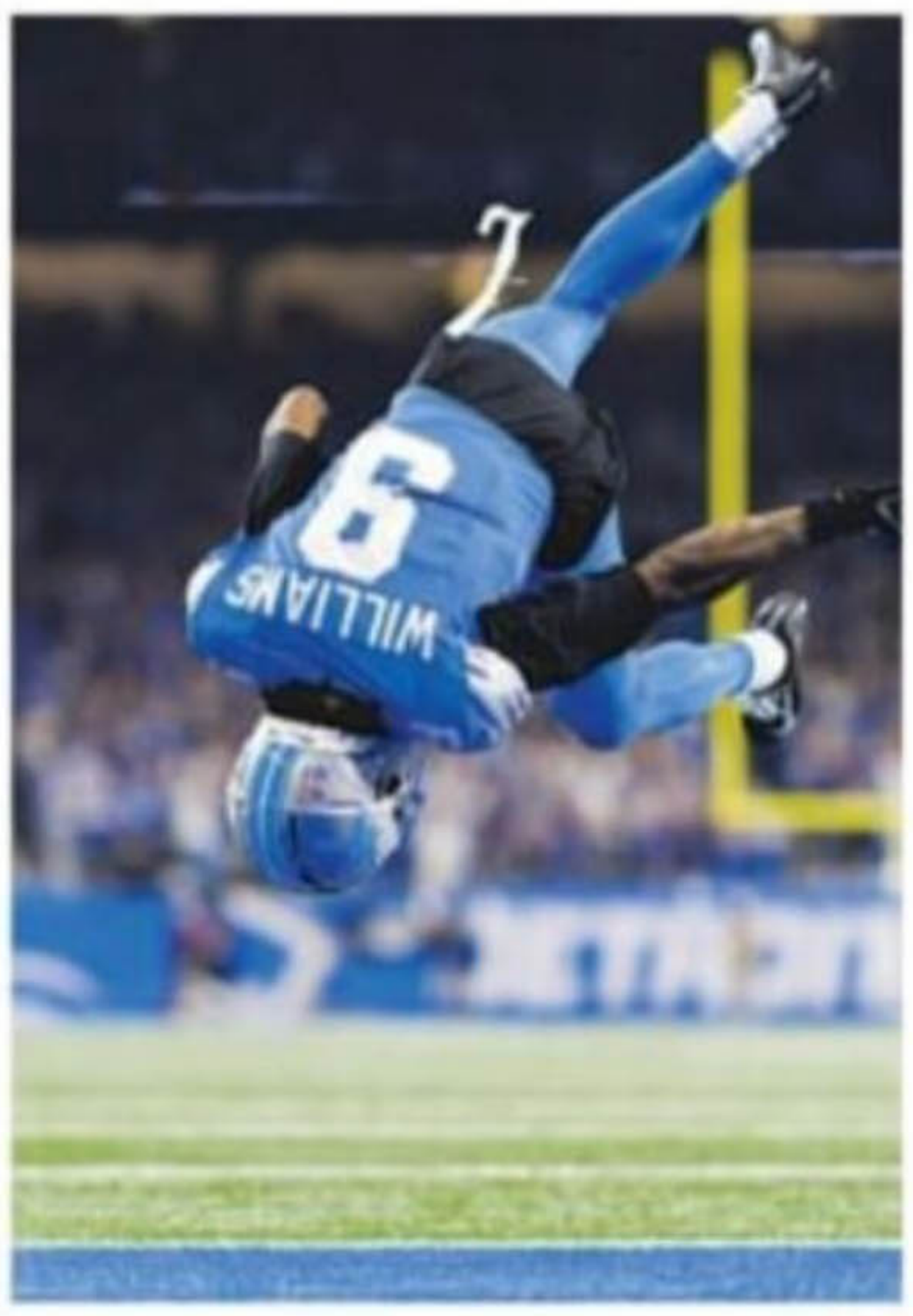


THE ODDS CERTAINLY favored the top-seeded Detroit Lions in this divisional playoff game against Washington. But the Commanders, led by rookie quarterback sensation Jayden Daniels, won the day, 45–31. Results notwithstanding, the Lions—using flea flickers, laterals and all kinds of hijinks in the game—did produce some amazing theatrics, especially on two plays in the first half. Midway through the second quarter, Detroit QB Jared Goff threw a short pass that tight end Sam LaPorta (87, above right) caught one-handed, giving the Lions a 14–10 lead. A few minutes later, after Washington had scored two quick touchdowns—one on a pick six off a Goff interception—the Lions tried an end-around with WR Jameson Williams (9, below right) getting the toss, cutting back across the field and marching 61 yards, punctuating his TD with a somersault into the end zone.

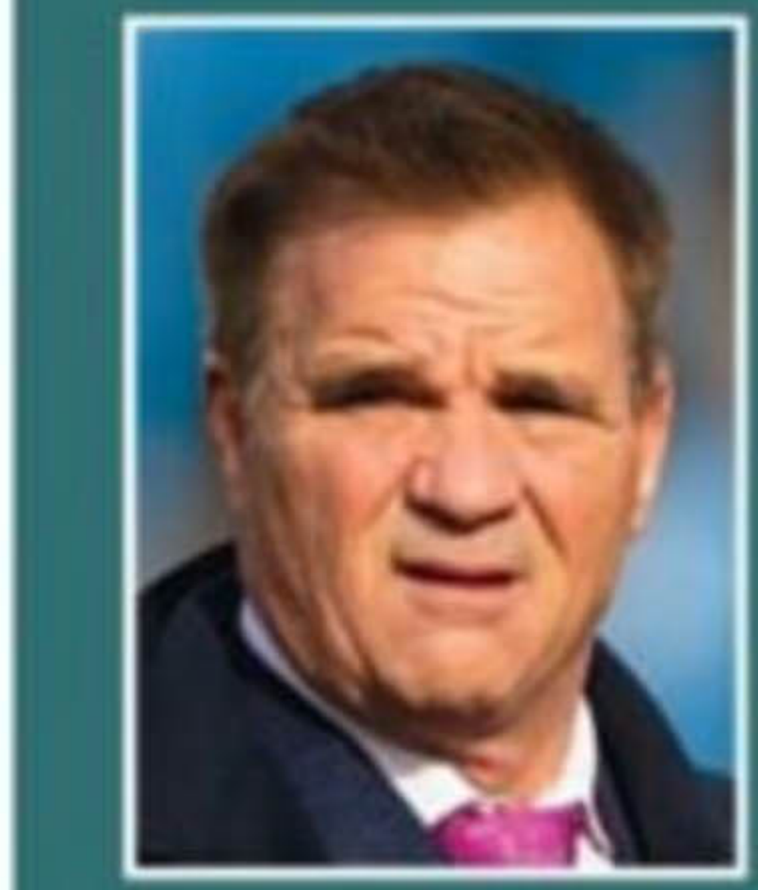
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: STEVEN KING/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES; BROOKE SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES (2); NIC ANTAYA/GETTY IMAGES







CAN THE EAGLES SOAR AGAIN?



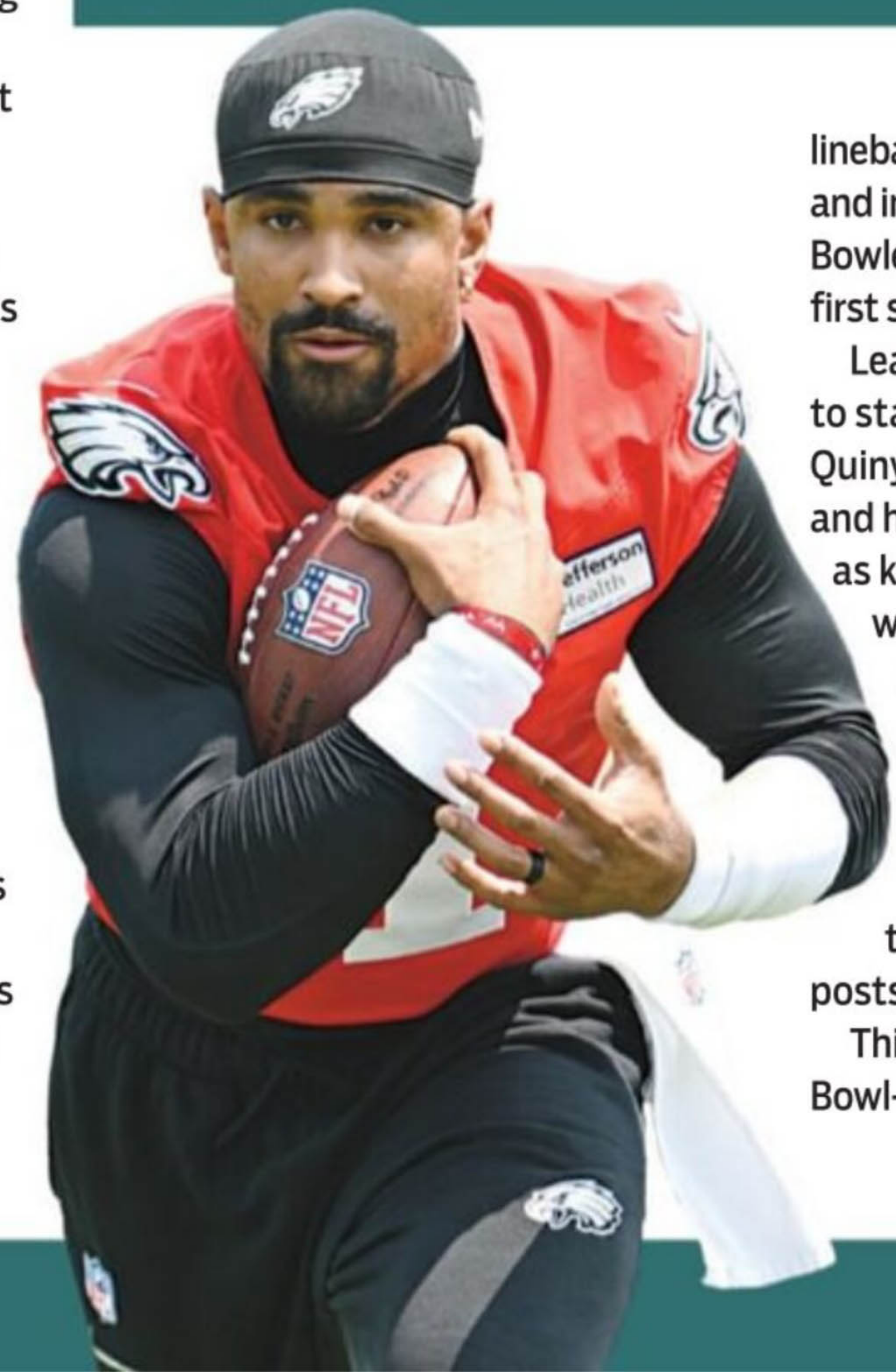
NFL Network's **BRIAN BALDINGER** sizes up the team's will-they-or-won't-they chances of a Super Bowl repeat ***By P.A. Schwartz***

WHY THE EAGLES WILL REPEAT

Were you paying attention when the Philadelphia Eagles devastated the Washington Commanders in the NFC championship game—and repeated that domination two weeks later over the Kansas City Chiefs in Super Bowl LIX? They scored a total of 95 points in those two one-sided victories. The Eagles looked more powerful than their high-level competition, deeper and more complete. That is a good place to start when considering why they can do it again and win it all this season.

If what's up front counts most, the Eagles have what it takes to repeat. Their offensive line is a living, breathing machine, especially when it comes to paving the way in the ground game. The blocking prowess of tackles Lane Johnson and Jordan Mailata, center Cam Jurgens and left guard Landon Dickerson added to the all-world talent flowing through the body of running back Saquon Barkley makes this rushing attack second to none. Factor in Jalen Hurts, a quarterback with the strongest legs in the league, and it is no wonder that there were NFL teams out there that voted (unsuccessfully) to ban the tush push short-yardage play the Eagles are able to execute to near perfection. "They return all 11 starters on offense," says former NFL offensive lineman and current NFL Network analyst Brian Baldinger. "It almost seems unfair, and they all are healthy."

This is an organization, led by general manager Howie Roseman, that often seems a step ahead of the competition, be that in its salary cap maneuvering, ability to reshape its coaching staff or its capacity for turning competent players from other teams into difference-makers once they get to Philadelphia. How was it that Zack Baun was a nondescript linebacker for four years in New Orleans and immediately blossomed into a Pro Bowler and first-team All-Pro in 2024, his first season with the Eagles?



Leave it to Philly to have the audacity to start two rookies at cornerback—Quinyon Mitchell and Cooper DeJean—and have those two youngsters emerge as key contributors to a defense that was good enough to roll to a Super Bowl triumph. "They bring back [defensive coordinator] Vic Fangio and a large chunk of the defense that was the best defense in football last year and they had 13 takeaways in the postseason," says Baldinger.

This all translates to another Super Bowl–contending season for the Birds.

TOP: BRETT CARLSEN/GETTY IMAGES. BOTTOM: TERENCE LEWIS/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES

Above: Right tackle Lane Johnson (65) and left tackle Jordan Mailata help anchor an O-line that should make QB Jalen Hurts (far left) and RB Saquon Barkley shine again in 2025. Barkley (left) became one of the few rushers in NFL history with a 2,000-yard-plus season in 2024, and Hurts added 630 yards on the ground with 14 touchdowns.

It's true, Saquon Barkley was magic in 2024…but can he continue that run in 2025? And not holding on to top veterans such as linebacker Josh Sweat (19, below) could come back to haunt Philly as 2025 plays out.

FROM TOP: MITCHELL LEFF/GETTY IMAGES; SARAH STIER/GETTY IMAGES; BY COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES

WHY THE EAGLES WON'T REPEAT

First of all, it's tough to repeat. Prior to the Chiefs winning back-to-back Super Bowls in 2023 and 2024, no team had repeated since the Patriots after the 2004 season. The last NFC team to win it in consecutive years? You need to look all the way back to the Cowboys in 1993. So, it does not happen often—or easily.

"And usually, you have to ask if there's complacency after you win like that," says Baldinger. "The Eagles went backward after they won Super Bowl LII. They didn't have nearly as good of a year the next year."

Sure, the Eagles bring back a fine roster. A strong roster. But perhaps not quite as glaringly dominating as it was a year ago. They lost two studs on the defensive front—Josh Sweat and Milton Williams—in free agency.

Another loss, this one on the back end of the defense, bears watching. The Eagles thought cornerback Darius Slay, at age 34, was not worth keeping around,and they released him after five seasons in Philadelphia. The hole will be filled by third-year Kelee Ringo, undrafted Eli Ricks or veteran addition Adoree' Jackson. Time will tell how that turns out.

There also is the matter of health. Saquon Barkley was not able to avoid injuries on a consistent basis with the Giants, but his first year trading blue for green was magnificent in every way, including durability. He did not miss a game in 2024. Can Barkley, at 28 years old, do that again?

"The only guy that really has a succession of seasons where they had around 400 or more touches and never lost anything was LaDainian Tomlinson," says Baldinger. "Almost every guy that's had 400-plus touches has fallen off the next year."

There is also the matter of continuity, or lack thereof. After only one season with the Eagles, offensive coordinator Kellen Moore departed to become the head coach of the New Orleans Saints. That means Jalen Hurts will need to grow accustomed to his fifth play-caller as he enters his sixth NFL season.

At least the replacement is not a stranger, as Kevin Patullo, the passing game coordinator, was promoted to offensive coordinator. The Eagles also lost quarterbacks coach Doug Nussmeier, who is now the Saints' offensive coordinator. "I often think it's harder to replace great coaches than great players," says Baldinger.

So it will not be easy for the Eagles to repeat as champions.

The Ruling on the Field

The league worked overtime to figure out the new regulations for 2025

By Dylan Ford

Say farewell to the nose-wipe, but no worries—the tush push is still alive after this year's NFL owners meeting. That's when, every year, the 32 team owners vote on rule changes. Proposed ideas on "player protection, officiating, competitive balance and technology" get input from player reps, coaches, managers and medical professionals and then must receive approval from 75% (24 total) of the league's clubs. Here are some things that did and didn't make the cut.

1 THE PHILADELPHIA EAGLES WILL PUSH ON WITH THEIR "BROTHERLY SHOVE"

The Green Bay Packers asked the NFL to ban the controversial tush push, but the vote fell short. In the end, 22 owners voted in favor of the ban and 10 against it.

2 THE NOSE KNOWS...AND NOW THE REFS DO AS WELL

Dallas Cowboys wideout CeeDee Lamb has been busted. His "nose-wipe" celebratory touchdown gesture, which has been associated with gang culture, is now considered "unsportsmanlike" and worth a 15-yard penalty if used.

3 OT RULES ARE NOW OK FOR REGULAR AND POSTSEASON

In line with the changes made to postseason overtime in 2022, regular season OT rules now provide each team with one guaranteed possession, even if the first team scores a touchdown. Some key differences remain: Regular-season OTs will be 10 minutes and can end in a tie. Postseason OTs will remain at 15 minutes, and any tie will trigger another OT.

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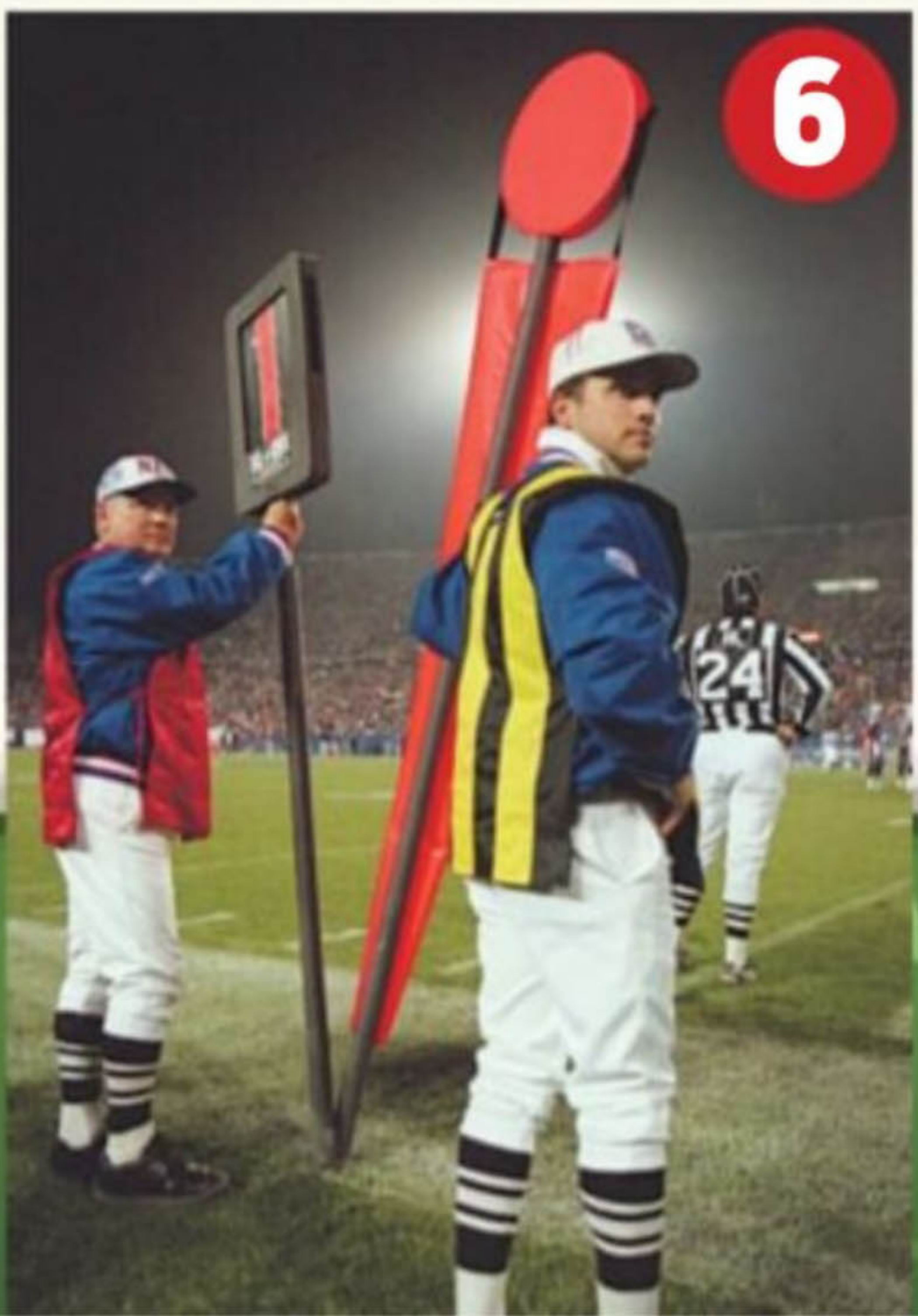


6

4 LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

All 32 owners voted unanimously to allow NFL players to try out for flag football at the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. Each team will allow one player apiece to play on any one country's team. That means a maximum of 32 NFL players on Team USA, but plenty of room for international players to rep home countries.

5 THE "DYNAMIC KICKOFF" RULE IS SET TO ACTUALLY BECOME MORE DYNAMIC

The "Dynamic Kickoff" implemented in 2024, which moved teams closer together to encourage returns and prevent injury, has been made permanent—with a few changes. Touchbacks have been moved from the 30- to the 35-yard line, which should make for more kickoff returns, since it's much less advantageous to kick the ball into the end zone for a touchback.

6 THE NFL IS LOSING ITS CHAINS!

Well...not quite. But those iconic analog heroes of any game—the referees who "move the chains" to measure first downs—are being replaced by a digital measure, courtesy of six Sony Hawk-Eye cameras. The chains will be a supplementary fixture. So as of 2025, the NFL is a fugitive from the chain gang.

7 THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME—BUT THE OLD RULES REMAIN

The Detroit Lions suggested a rule change in how home field advantage is decided, allowing wild-card teams to play at home if they had a better regular season record than their division-winner opponents in the playoffs. The rule was discussed fervently but ultimately withdrawn. As they say in sports, better luck next year.

FROM TOP: ANDY LEWIS/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES; RON JENKINS/GETTY IMAGES; MATTHEW ASHTON/EMPICS VIA GETTY IMAGES

PASS OR FAIL

Which teams will rise higher in 2025 and which will lose some ground? Our expert panel sizes up the football fortunes **By Dylan Ford**

BACK IN ACTION A healthy Christian McCaffrey at RB will help the 49ers heal their woes.

If luck is when preparation meets opportunity, then our panel of football experts predicts these teams' hard work in the offseason has written their success into the stars this coming season.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS
Between new head coach Mike Vrabel and the progress made with Drake Maye at quarterback last year, the Pats should be on the rise in the AFC East, according to ESPN national NFL insider Dan Graziano. "They're not all the way there yet, but I think they'll be better than they were last year."

BALTIMORE RAVENS The AFC North powerhouse lost to Buffalo in the division round last year, but they've got both offensive and defensive chops, per ESPN analyst Mike Tannenbaum. "I think the Ravens have a chance to go deep into the playoffs because they are extremely well balanced on both sides of the ball."

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS "I'll surprise some people, but I'll say the Colts," says Fox Sports AFC South reporter Ben Arthur. Though the team's QB situation might be unresolved, they have a revamped defense, plus RB Jonathan Taylor and TE Tyler Warren, "who might be generational. [That] means they're a team that might finally make some noise."

ATLANTA FALCONS
"I love what [Atlanta] did on defense in the offseason," raves Fox NFL reporter Jen Hale. Signings like Leonard Floyd, Jalon Walker and James Pearce Jr. could give a shot in the arm to the Falcons' struggling pass rush. "This could finally be the year they knock off the Bucs [in the NFC South]."

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS
The NFC West cellar dwellers last year are poised to overcome the injuries that held them back, says NBC Sports analyst Jason Garrett. "I think getting guys healthy and adding Robert Saleh as the defensive coordinator will help them get their identity back on that side of the ball."

What goes up must come down, which means even the best can't stay on top forever. Our experts think these teams might be destined for a fall.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS
Aaron Rodgers may be an all-time great, but ESPN analyst Mike Tannenbaum has concerns about how late the veteran QB was added to the AFC North team's roster. "Not being in the offseason program and not signing till June is a big challenge."

HOUSTON TEXANS
They've got the best team in the division, per Fox Sports AFC South reporter Ben Arthur. But their retooled offensive line? "On paper, it's underwhelming. They're also learning a new scheme, which means bumps and bruises along the way."

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS
Fox Sports NFL analyst Chris Myers sees the Broncos, Raiders and Chargers as threats looming on the horizon for K.C.: "I think it's not so much that the Chiefs have slipped a lot. It's that the [AFC West] is slowly catching up to them."

DALLAS COWBOYS Is it possible to go lower after their dismal 2024? NFL Network analyst Brian Baldinger says it's about expectation for the NFC East squad: "They're relevant because they're Dallas, but they don't look like a team ready to win more playoff games to me."

MINNESOTA VIKINGS
After overperforming last year thanks to ex-QB Sam Darnold, the Vikings may have hit their max in the NFC North, predicts CBS Sports analyst Amy Trask. "I don't think it will be a staggering drop, but they might just revert to the norm."

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS
With a brand-new coaching staff and a rookie starting QB in Tyler Shough, the Saints have to go backward to move forward in the NFC South, says Fox NFL reporter Jen Hale: It's a "changing of the guard in a complete sense, and it's going to take some time to adjust."

TEXANS HEAD SOUTH? QB C.J. Stroud is among the best in the game, but if the O-line doesn't protect him well, it could be a pretty long year for the team.

TOP: MICHAEL ZAGARIS/SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS/GETTY IMAGES. BOTTOM: AARON M. SPRECHER/GETTY IMAGES

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE
FANTASY FOOTBALL

Here's everything you need to know to impress your friends and be at the top of your league

BY EMILY ASLANIAN

Drafting a fantasy football team is easy—but judiciously choosing a roster of players who can take your team to the playoffs requires know-how, strategy and some good fortune. Here, we outline everything you need to know, from helpful terms in our Gridiron Glossary to this year's top projected players, rookies and sleeper hits.

Each league values scoring differently, but you'll earn points for nearly everything that happens on the field, from passing yards to rushing yards, and of course, touchdowns. Receptions (see PPR League, right) as well as field goals will all rack up points.

Keep this handy guide with you all season long for surefire success. And whether your league is playing for money, a shiny trophy or just bragging rights, this cheat sheet will keep you from winding up at the bottom of the scoreboard.

GRIDIRON GLOSSARY

Commissioner

The person responsible for your fantasy league. Each league needs a fair and unbiased leader who is able to run the draft, collect fees, make announcements and break up any potential quarrels among competitive team managers (that's you).

Injured Reserve (IR)

A way to store your injured players on your lineup without penalty. There are many ways to customize the rules around IR, but it all boils down to this: If an NFL player is officially injured and no longer earning points, you can move them to your IR spot and pick up someone new to fill the gap in your roster.

Probable vs. Questionable vs. Doubtful vs. Out

The varying statuses of players. Everything from a minor ankle twist to legal issues can prevent footballers from hitting the field. "Probable" means there's a 75% chance they'll play; "questionable" drops to 50%; and "doubtful" is a 25% likelihood.

PPR League

PPR stands for "points per reception." It's not all about yards and touchdowns in fantasy. This newer, popular scoring technique usually offers one point per reception too.

Bye Week

The week a team doesn't play. Every NFL team plays 16 out of 17 weeks in the season. That break in the schedule also means your players on that team won't be earning you points—so make sure you bench them before it's too late.

DRAFT STRATEGY

There are two main drafting styles. An auction draft allows team managers to bid on players with fake money. That may sound fun, but it can be overwhelming for newbies. The standard draft, aka a snake draft, is most common. Once the drafting order is chosen, managers take turns picking players as the order flips each round. So first pick in Round 1 gets the last pick in Round 2, forming a sssssnake-like shape as the draft goes on.

YOUR STARTING LINEUP BEST BETS

So you're ready to pick your team? This list is just a small selection of the promising players in 2025's fantasy pool. Keep an eye on their average draft position (ADP), but you'll also want to look for potential injuries, how they played last season and how likely they are to play well (or at all!) this year.

It's also important to pay attention to bye weeks. If three of your starting players are off on Week 13...that would be truly unlucky.

Depending on your team size, your lineup might consist of one quarterback (QB), two or three running backs (RB), two or three wide receivers (WR), one tight end (TE), one kicker (K), one defensive team (D/ST) and one flex (RB or WR). Plus bench players for backups.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: EMILEE CHINN/GETTY IMAGES; DYLAN BUELL/GETTY IMAGES; STEPHEN MATUREN/GETTY IMAGES; COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES; PERRY KNOTTS/GETTY IMAGES; STEVE MARCUS/GETTY IMAGES; TIMOTHY T LUDWIG/GETTY IMAGES; MICHAEL OWENS/GETTY IMAGES; MICHAEL OWENS/GETTY IMAGES; TODD KIRKLAND/GETTY IMAGES

RUNNING BACKS

Saquon Barkley, Eagles

In his first year on the Eagles, Barkley hit a career high, joining the 2,000-yard rushing club and leading RBs in fantasy points (22.2 per game). But can he do it again?

Bijan Robinson, Falcons

Robinson's a close second to Barkley, and he's even favored over Barkley in some mock drafts this year. Why? He's a workhorse with the stats to back it up.

Jahmyr Gibbs, Lions

Gibbs is a solid pick for any team. He's earned the most in PPR scoring overall the last two seasons, since joining the NFL. He's a high-impact player who would make a great asset.

WIDE RECEIVERS

Ja'Marr Chase, Bengals

Chase is currently the No. 1 draft pick for 2025. He was the highest earner last fantasy season with a whopping 403 points in 2024. That's 23.7 per game.

Justin Jefferson, Vikings

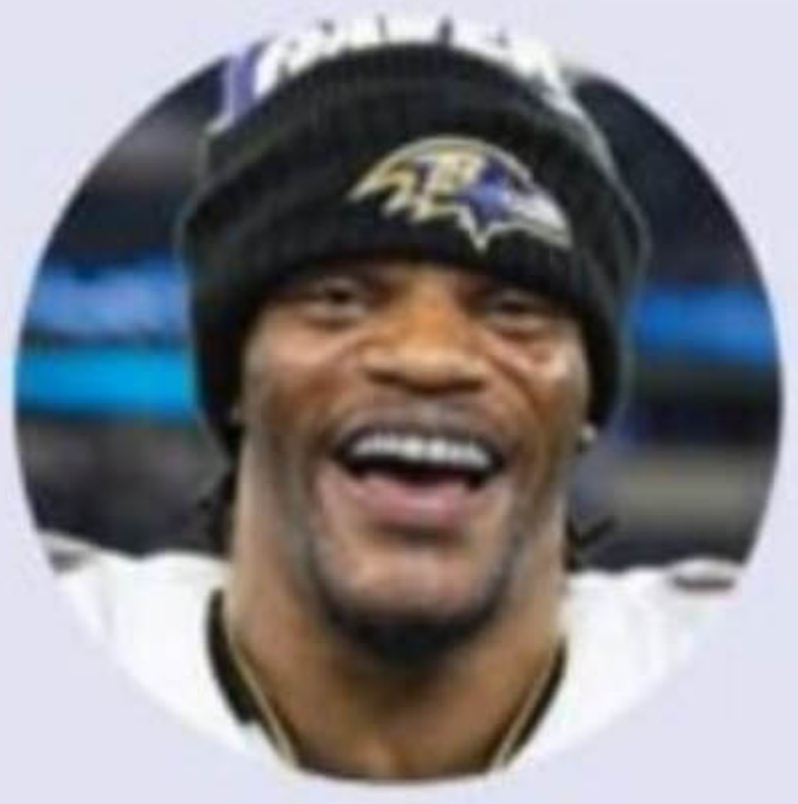
Jefferson is a top candidate, but the biggest concern here is that he's playing with a new QB this season, J.J. McCarthy. Still, Jefferson's track record is solid.

CeeDee Lamb, Cowboys

Anyone who has drafted Lamb before knows he is a major earner (2023's best) and very well could outrank Jefferson this year. You can't go wrong with him.

QUARTERBACKS

Lamar Jackson, Ravens



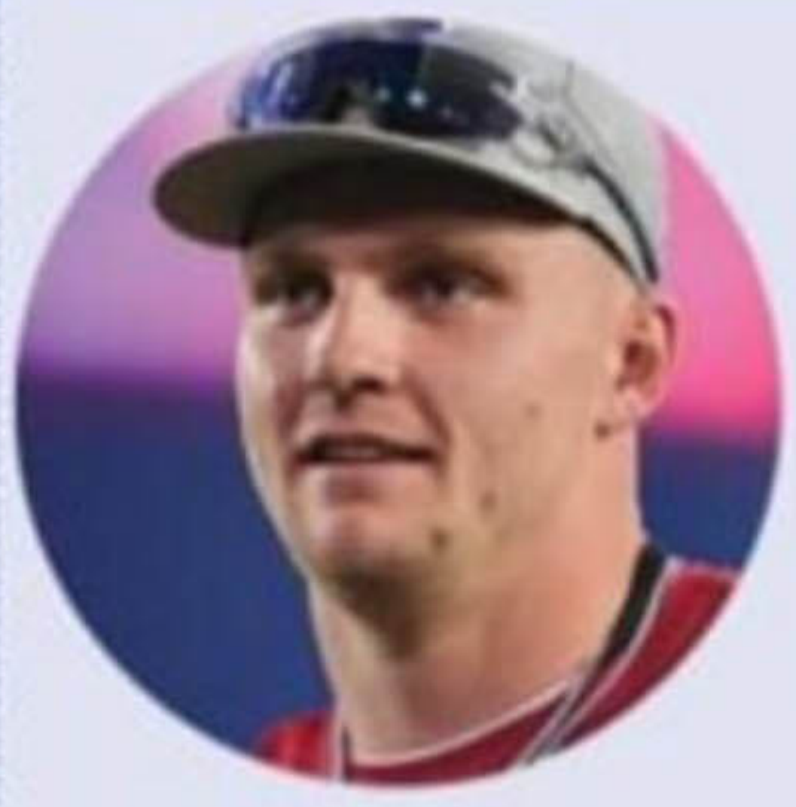
Jackson had the most impressive year in his career last season, earning the most rushing yards by a quarterback and making huge strides as a passer. He is worthy.

Josh Allen, Bills

Allen, fresh off an MVP season, is an obvious great choice for your team. Expect his consistently elite playing to continue into the 2025 season.

TIGHT ENDS

Trey McBride, Cardinals



Pro: He is undeniably essential to Arizona's passing game. Con: He only scored two touchdowns last year, both of which happened near the end of the season.

Brock Bowers, Raiders

Bowers rocketed to the No. 1 TE pick after an incredible rookie season where he set records in receiving yards (1,194) and receptions (112). Can he top it in year two?

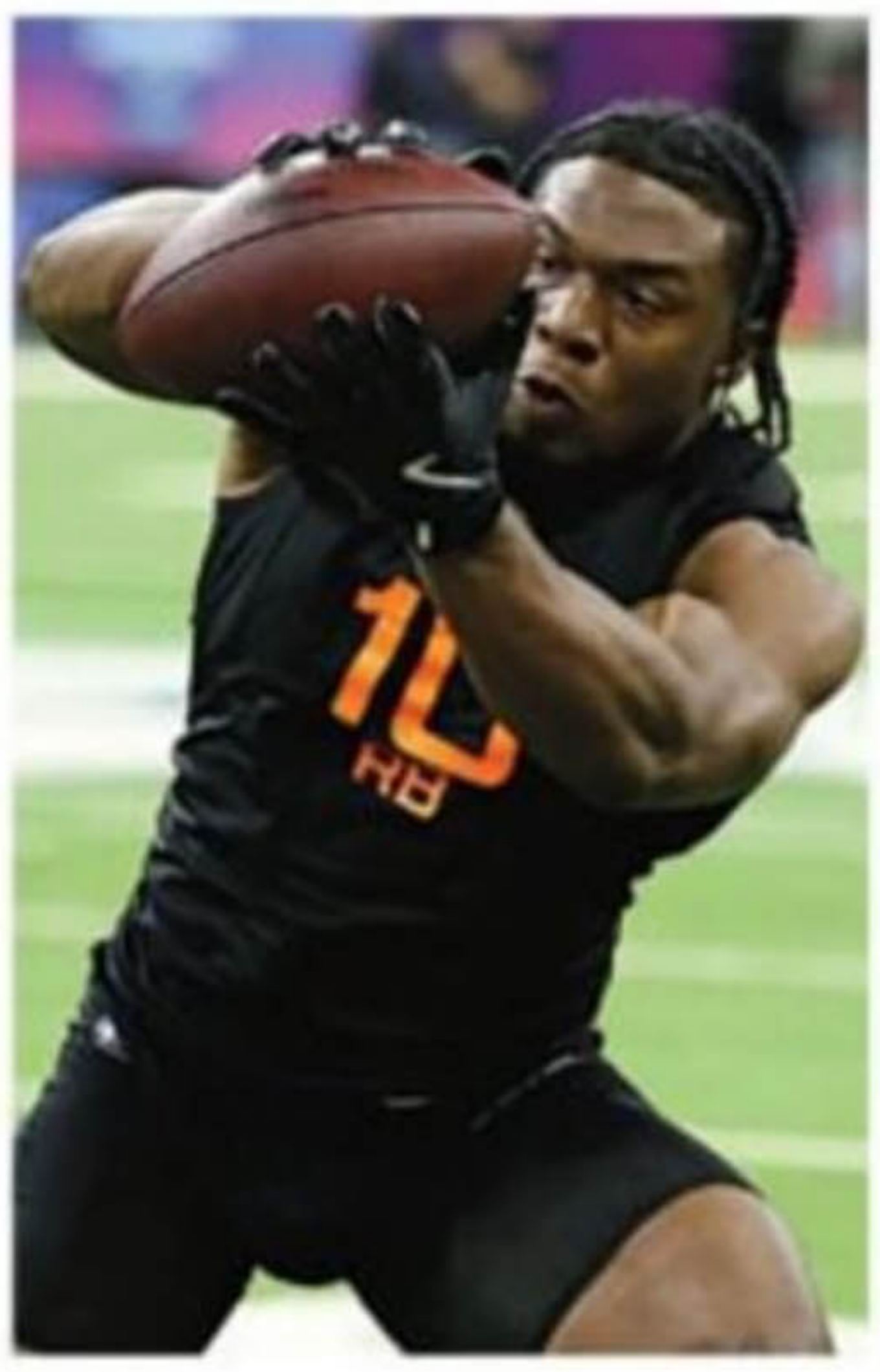
SLEEPER PICKS & ROOKIES

Take a chance on these potentially undervalued players! You never know what might happen during the NFL season to any of the players you draft, and since this is all for fun (*right*?), why not add in a few gambles? The following six footballers are current favorites who we think might outscore their current projections and exceed expectations.

Take a look and consider adding one or two to your drafting queue. And hey, if they score big? The payoff would be huge.

Omarion Hampton RB, Chargers

Already labeled a standout during the offseason, rookie Hampton is currently projected to be a late Round 4 in many mock drafts. Someone is bound to snatch up this shiny points-earner. Will it be you?

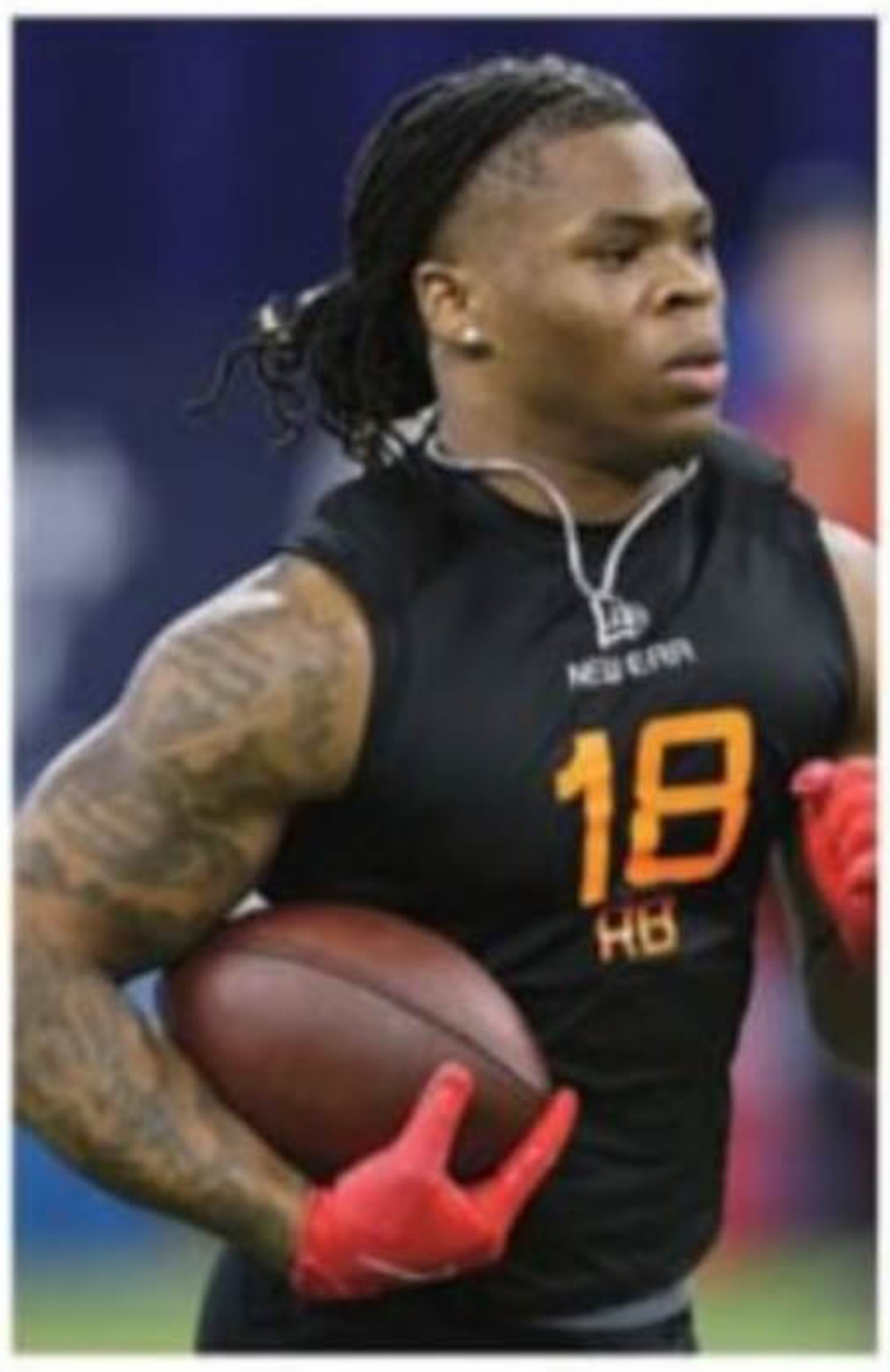


RJ Harvey RB, Broncos

A possible diamond in the rough, 24-year-old Harvey was chosen as the 60th overall pick in the second round by the Broncos—a potential starting player who could amount to a big return.

Jaydon Blue RB, Cowboys

Rookie Blue may be a formidable choice as a late-draft pickup. He's already sworn to become the Cowboys' "next great back." And you can be the one who says they drafted him when...



Quinshon Judkins RB, Browns

Judkins is a productive player who isn't being hyped nearly as much as Hampton or the Raiders' new RB, Ashton Jeanty. That makes him the perfect grab to fill out your roster—no one will bat an eye.

Darius Slayton WR, Giants

Aside from giving you great team name options (Slayton the Field, anyone?), this underrated wide receiver signed a $22 million guaranteed contract this offseason with the Giants. Enough said.

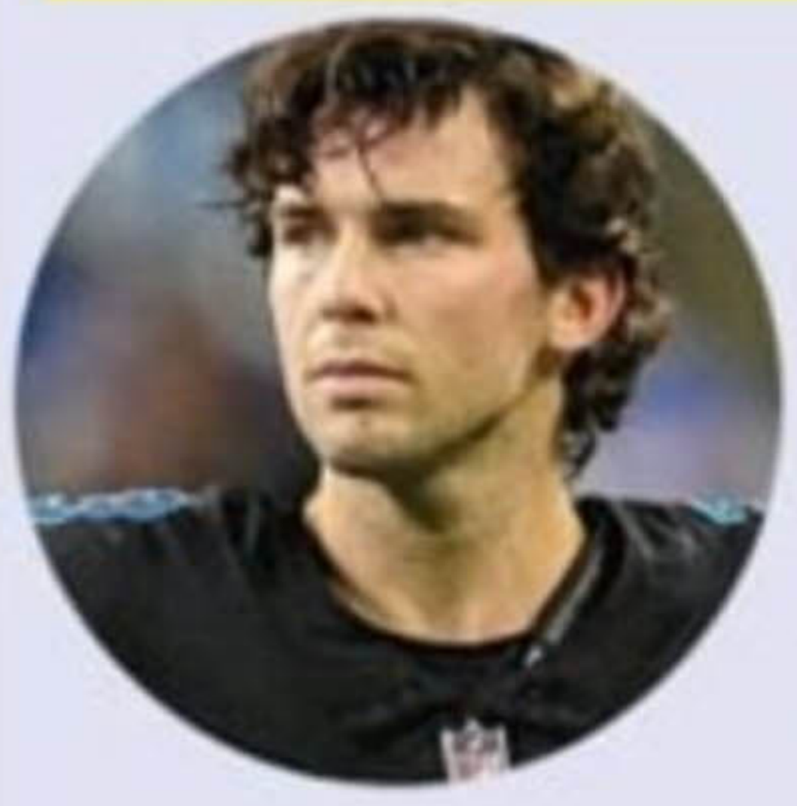
Daniel Jones QB, Colts

Jones—who was also a sleeper pick in 2024 when he was on the Vikings—is currently vying for the Colts' starting quarterback position against Anthony Richardson. If he gets it, he's a solid backup QB.

BEST BETS

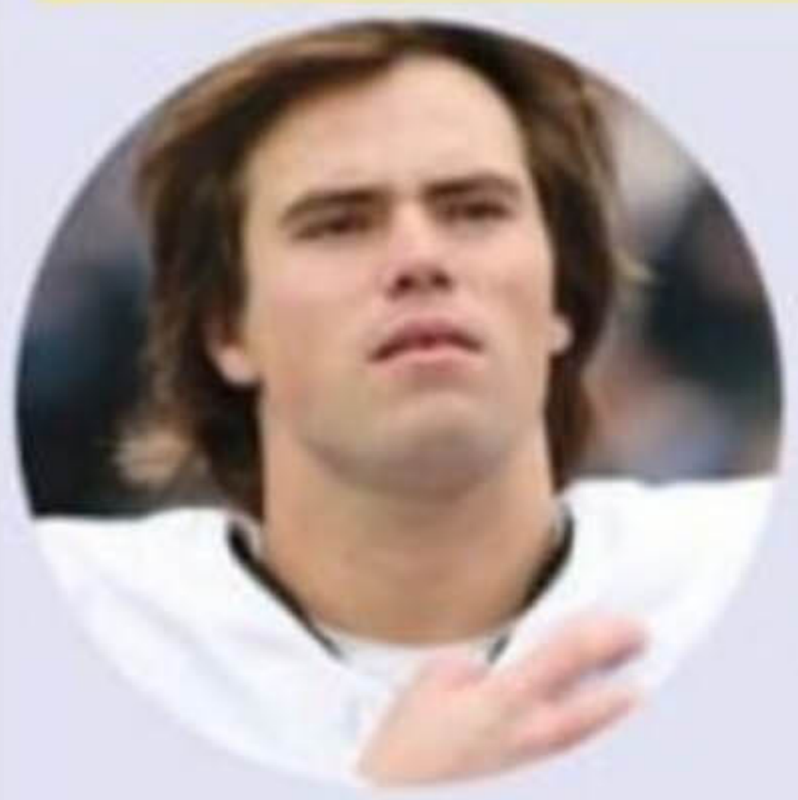
KICKERS

Jake Bates, Lions



Kickers should be low on the priority list, but you will need one. We like Bates for that spot. He had a fantastic first year with the Lions in 2024 and his future looks bright.

Cameron Dicker, Chargers



Dicker saw major improvement under new coach Jim Harbaugh in 2024. We expect that trajectory to continue, so Dicker can keep up his high field-goal volume.

DEFENSE

Texans

With breakout Derek Stingley Jr.—now the highest-paid cornerback in the NFL—the Texans are a good pick for D/ST. It's one of the lesser-scoring spots in fantasy, but these guys won't put you in the negative.

Broncos

The Broncos ended last season as the top fantasy D/ST, leading the Vikings by 12 points. With cornerback Patrick Surtain II, they could match those numbers again.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NIC ANTAYA/GETTY IMAGES; KEITH BIRMINGHAM/MEDIANEWS GROUP/PASADENA STAR-NEWS VIA GETTY IMAGES; STACY REVERE/GETTY IMAGES; JOHN RIVERA/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES; JUSTIN CASTERLINE/GETTY IMAGES; COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES; STACY REVERE/GETTY IMAGES; PERRY KNOTTS/GETTY IMAGES (2); KATHRYN RILEY/GETTY IMAGES

GRIDIRON GLOSSARY

Waiver Wire

Where to acquire hot players not already drafted. Aside from trading with fellow managers, the waiver wire is how you'll fill in players during bye weeks or make up for lost causes on your roster. Your commissioner sets rules on when the waiver wire is open and who gets priority.

Free Agent

Players available for pickup after the waiver period. If no one picks a player up from the waiver wire, they become a free agent—available to all. If you have an open spot on your roster, that is.

TEAM MANAGEMENT

If you've drafted an A+ lineup—it doesn't end there. Now you need to maintain greatness week to week. Here's how.

Set a time each week to review your roster

Before the Thursday game every week, you'll want to log into your fantasy football account and look at your lineup. Is there someone on your bench projected to score high that you would rather start? Do you have any players on a bye week to move onto your bench? Make sure every position is filled.

Don't be afraid to dump underperformers

Sometimes, draft picks don't work out and players don't score the way they're expected to. Outside of the IR, if a player isn't cutting it week after week, it's OK to drop them from your lineup. Holding on to the less-than-stellar options will only sink your team quicker.

Trades, trades, trades!

Proposing trades with your fellow team managers is a part of fantasy football that newcomers often neglect, but it can yield good results for your team and build camaraderie within the league. Keep in mind that the commissioner should only bless fair swaps—and in some leagues, other team managers can veto a trade.

APP WARS: ESPN vs. NFL

There are a number of apps you can choose to host your fantasy football league. Today, we're looking at two popular options: ESPN Fantasy and NFL Fantasy. That said, if you're interested in exploring further, look at Yahoo!, Sleeper, Fantrax and CBS Sports, which are all worthy alternatives.

PROS

USER-FRIENDLY ESPN Fantasy is well-regarded as a top app for fantasy football, and it's easy to see why once you download it. It just makes it easy to play!

PLENTY OF HELPFUL ADVICE Those ESPN experts know a thing or two, and there are sections for stories and video content throughout the app for your perusal. Set up notifications and you'll never stop learning.

CONS

TEAM NICKNAMES While nice in theory, the nicknames feature (which shows a team's self-created nickname instead of their actual team name in certain areas of the app) can make it trickier than necessary to ID your fellow managers—especially if you're still getting to know them all!

THERE'S A PAYWALL The app is free to download and play on, but if you don't have ESPN+, lots of those helpful articles might be unavailable to you.

PROS

IT'S THE OFFICIAL NFL APP Do we really need to say more? You'll always get quality, up-to-the-minute highlights, inside and outside of the fantasy sections.

EASY-TO-USE Newbies, hear us out: The optimization tool will change your life, especially if you're struggling to keep up week-to-week with the nitty-gritty details of each player. Instead, hit "optimize" and let the app set the highest projected starting roster it can for you.

COOL FEATURES The app's Next Gen Stats (NGS) collects data that will blow your mind through an on-the-field tracking system that, according to the NFL, "captures player location, speed, distance traveled and acceleration at a rate of 10 times per second."

CON

IS IT *TOO* SIMPLIFIED? Perhaps. Its sleek, easy design is also lacking in some of the detailed settings other apps might offer. It definitely caters toward new players and team managers who don't have a strong grasp on the game.

AFC EAST

BUFFALO BILLS

2024 WRAP-UP

The Bills were great again—just not great enough. The team won its fifth-straight division title, rolling up a formidable 13–4 record in the process, with the expectation that this could be the year. But the team once again lost to Kansas City in the playoffs, this time in the AFC championship game.

2025 OUTLOOK

The Bills are better, loading up both sides of the ball through the draft and free agency. Heavy hitters include former Chargers All-Pro Joey Bosa and Rams defensive end Michael Hoecht. It may bring them closer to the top; the only rub is, the other teams in the division got better too.

STATS

Head Coach Sean McDermott
2024 Record 13–4; finished first in the division and lost to Kansas City in AFC championship game
Offensive Leaders Josh Allen, 483 attempts, 307 completions, 3,731 yards; James Cook, 207 attempts, 1,009 yards
Defensive Leaders Dorian Williams, 117 tackles, seven players with 2 interceptions each; Greg Rousseau, 8 sacks

> “The Bills are one of the league’s best organizations, but they have the great misfortune of playing at the same time as Mahomes and the Chiefs.”
>
> **Dan Graziano**

GAINS

The Bills further shored up their defense with draft picks including defensive tackle Deone Walker and cornerback Jordan Hancock, who bring ball-hawking degrees from college, alongside touted cornerback Maxwell Hairston.

LOSSES

Team leader, and 11-year veteran defensive anchor, safety Micah Hyde retired and former All-Pro edge rusher Von Miller (above) was released and entered the free agent market. Longtime punter Sam Martin was released by the team and signed with the Panthers.

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

“How can you say it’s *not* **Josh Allen**?” suggests ESPN national NFL insider Dan Graziano. “The quarterback is always the key player and he’s one of the best. They lost lead receiver Stefon Gibbs last year and there was a thought they would drop back, but they haven’t...that’s because of Josh.”

THE PLAYMAKER

“Running back **James Cook** is coming off a big year. He’s an explosive player who can also score from long distance, which adds a pretty exciting dimension,” Graziano says. In his third season in the league, Cook tied a Bills single-season record with 16 rushing touchdowns.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

“They added veteran edge-rusher **Joey Bosa** (below) from the Chargers to be their roadblock on the line,” says Graziano. The five-time Pro Bowler free agent signing is thrilled to be a full-time lineman for Buffalo in the same 4–3 defense that saw him earn All-America honors at Ohio State.

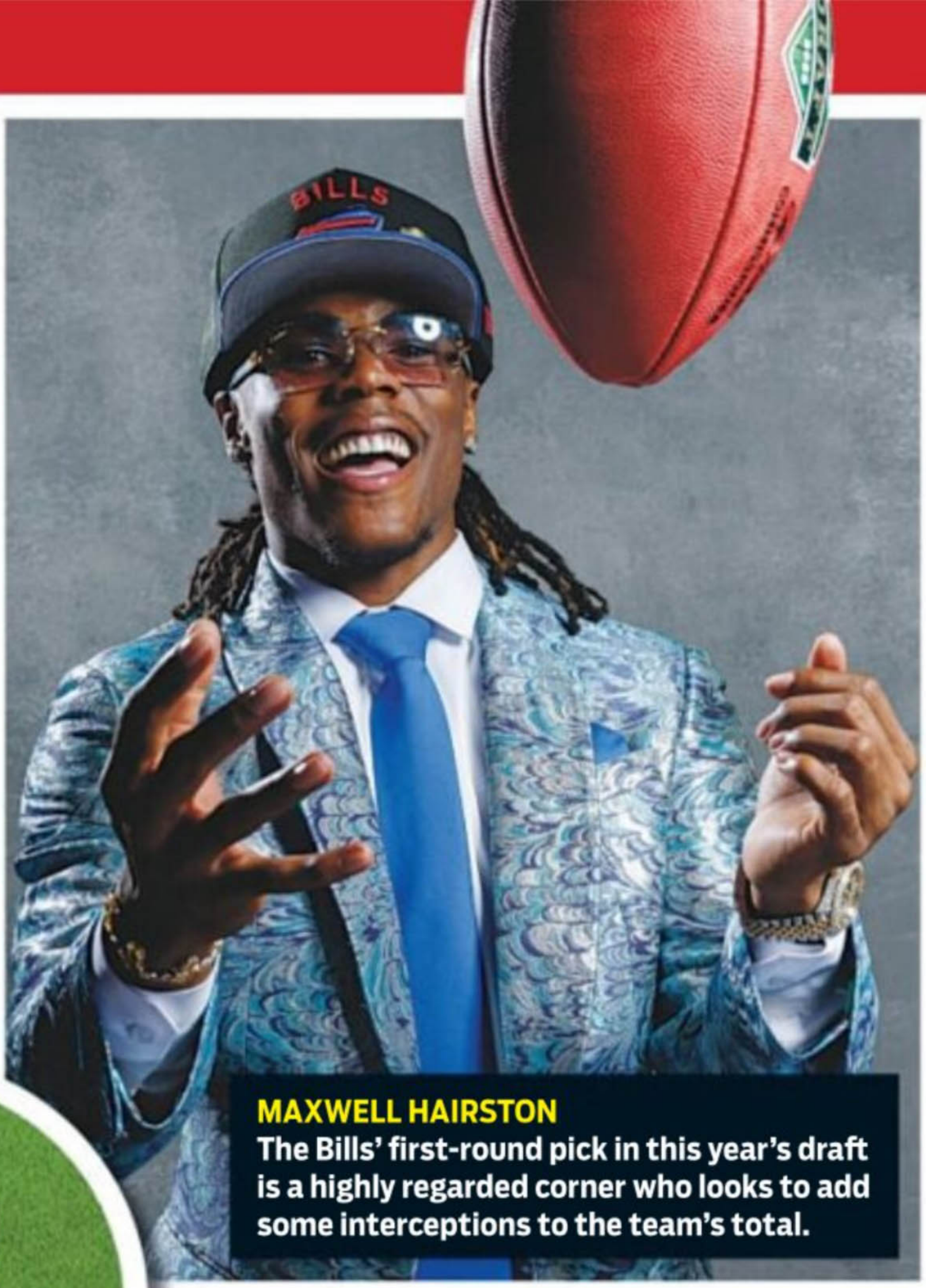
THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

The Bills’ added juice to their receiving core with another ex-Charger, **Josh Palmer**. The versatile wideout averaged more than 15 yards per reception over the last two seasons in L.A. His presence as a deep threat will attract more defensive coverage and free up wide receiver Keon Coleman and tight end Dalton Kincaid. —*Mike Hammer*

LEFT: KATELYN MULCAHY/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: BRANDON SLOTER/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

JOSH ALLEN
Last season's NFL MVP starts the 2025 campaign with a newly inked six-year contract extension and goals to match.



MAXWELL HAIRSTON
The Bills' first-round pick in this year's draft is a highly regarded corner who looks to add some interceptions to the team's total.

GREG ROUSSEAU
The feared defensive end set career bests last year in tackles and forced fumbles.

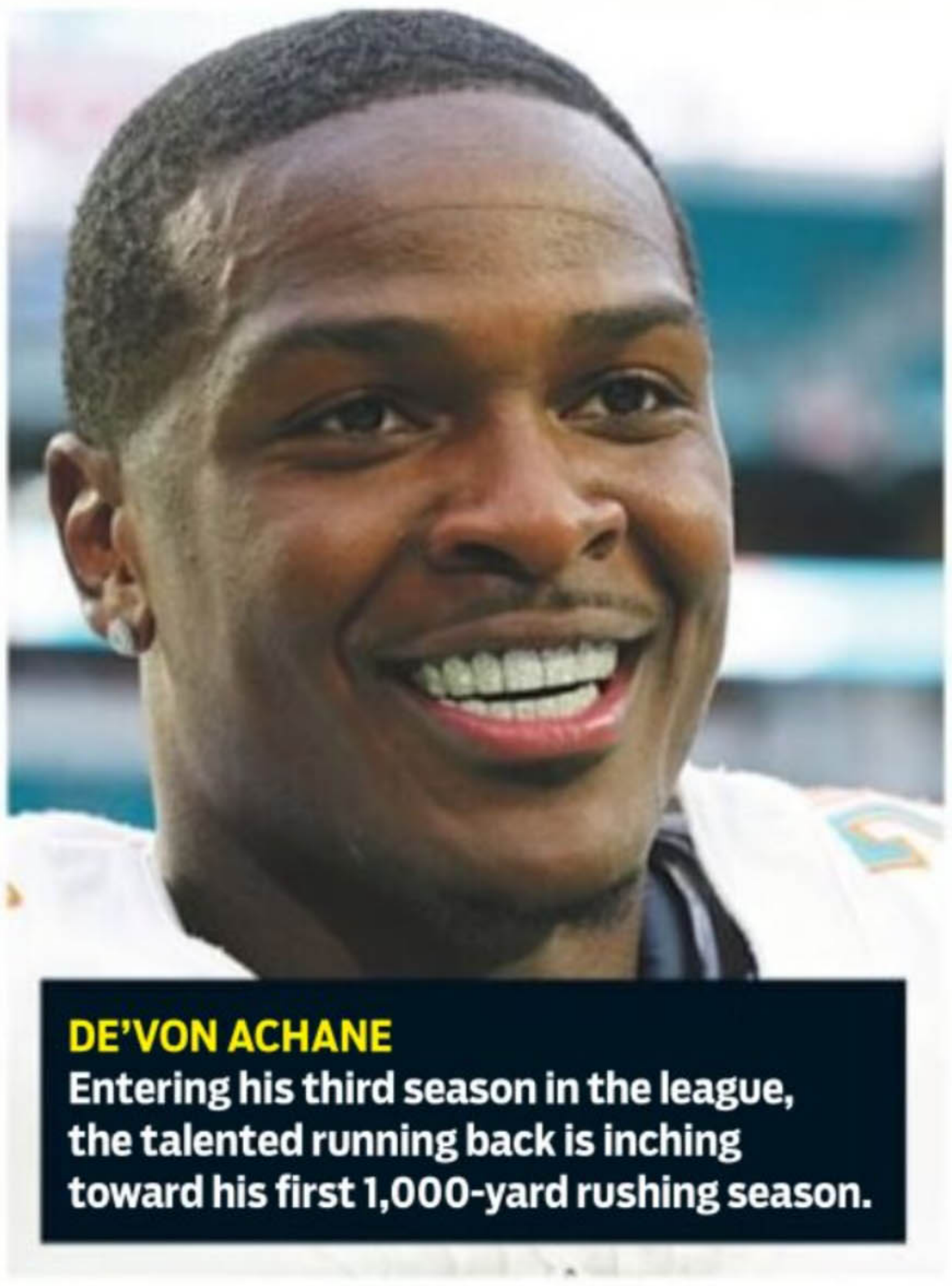
JAMES COOK
The two-time Pro Bowl RB posted a second-straight 1,000-yard rushing year and led the league with 16 TDs.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KEVIN SABITUS/GETTY IMAGES; LOGAN BOWLES/GETTY IMAGES; KEVIN SABITUS/GETTY IMAGES; TIMOTHY T LUDWIG/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

TYREEK HILL
"I'm out," the receiver said earlier this year. This season will be notable for Miami whether he suits up for them or not.

JORDYN BROOKS
The linebacker is in the middle year of a three-year deal with the Dolphins and was their most feared tackler last season.



DE'VON ACHANE
Entering his third season in the league, the talented running back is inching toward his first 1,000-yard rushing season.

TUA TAGOVAILOA
The Dolphins need to have their premier QB return to his 2023 form in health and productivity, but they'll have to limit his sacks.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NICK CAMMETT/DIAMOND IMAGES VIA GETTY IMAGES; CARMEN MANDATO/GETTY IMAGES; MEGAN BRIGGS/GETTY IMAGES; RICH STORRY/GETTY IMAGES

MIAMI DOLPHINS

AFC EAST

2024 WRAP-UP

The Phins went south last season, falling to a sub-.500 record. But they had to deal without star quarterback Tua Tagovailoa in stretches, after he suffered another concussion early and a hip injury late in the season. The team started the year 2–6, which ain't good.

2025 OUTLOOK

The Dolphins are swimming in talent—and turmoil. Questions swirl around the status of speedster receiver Tyreek Hill and whether Tagovailoa can stay on his feet without suffering another, possibly career-ending concussion. Without him, they are dead in the water.

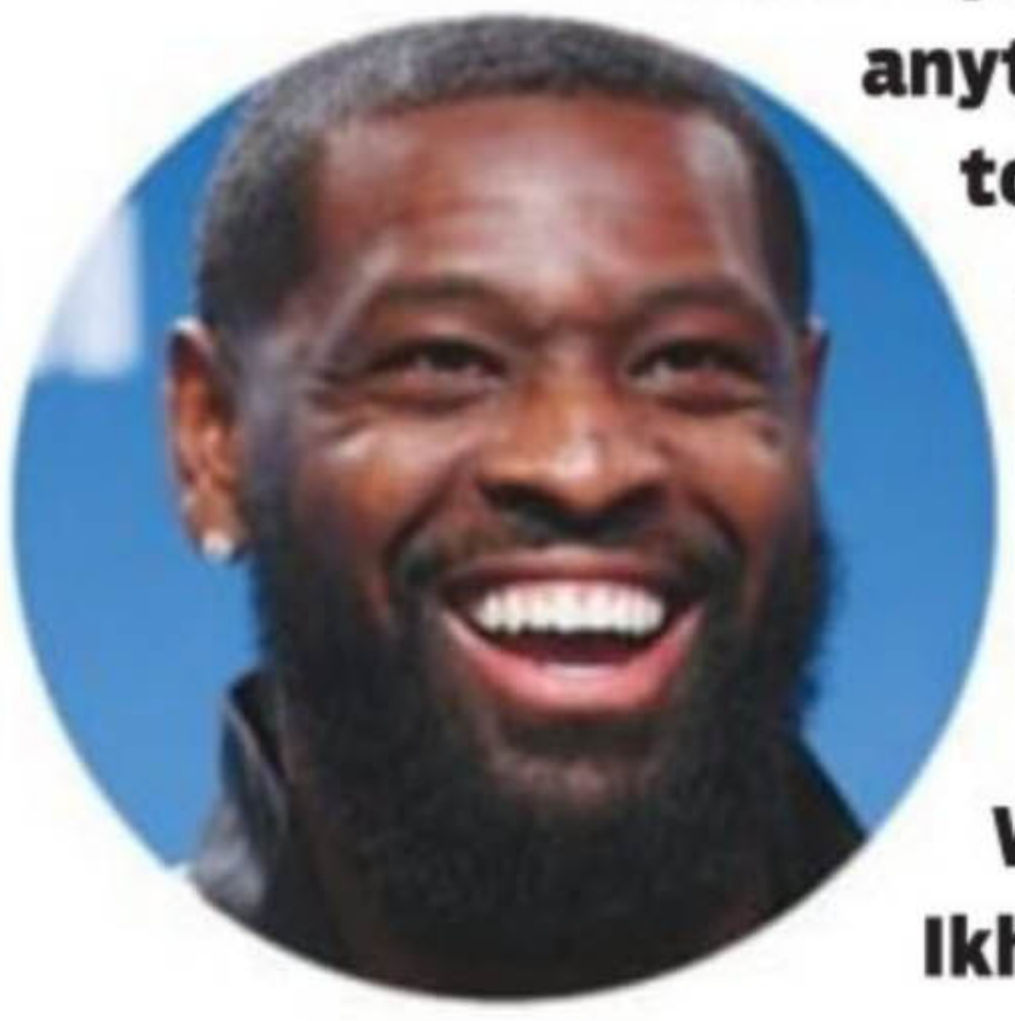
STATS

Head Coach Mike McDaniel
2024 Record 8–9; finished second in the division and missed the playoffs
Offensive Leaders Tua Tagovailoa, 399 attempts, 291 completions, 2,867 yards; De'Von Achane, 203 attempts, 907 yards
Defensive Leaders Jordyn Brooks, 143 tackles; Tyrel Dodson, 3 interceptions; Zach Sieler, 10 sacks

> “It always feels like they have a chance with coach Mike McDaniels. But they need to bulk up their lineup to compete in a tough division.”
>
> Dan Graziano

GAINS

Offensive guard James Daniels signed a three-year deal, which will certainly help in QB protection, and Zach Wilson will be a better bet as a No. 2 quarterback if anything happens to Tagovailoa. And whoever lines up under center, having new wideout Nick Westbrook-Ikhine helps.



LOSSES

Five-time Pro Bowl offensive tackle Terron Armstead (above) retired, which is critical, since the team's quarterback is often on the concussion list. Other departures include safety Jevon Holland and fellow offensive liners Kendall Lamm and Robert Jones.

LEFT: CINDY ORD/GETTY IMAGES FOR SIRIUSXM. RIGHT: TODD ROSENBERG/GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

“**Jaylen Waddle** [right] has to jump up for them,” says ESPN NFL insider Dan Graziano of the talented wideout. “Tyreek Hill is getting older, and is dealing with some injuries” and has long dealt with myriad off-field legal issues. Says Graziano, “They need Waddle to be more important in the passing game—and he's got the talent to do it.“

THE PLAYMAKER

Graziano cites running back **De'von Achane**. “Two years ago, as a rookie, he had these incredible long touchdown runs. He had a couple of health issues last year, but when he's on the field he's a hyper-explosive weapon.”

THE DRIVE STOPPER

“**Jordyn Brooks** is a key defensive line contributor,” says Graziano. The linebacker, who led the team with 143 tackles, also picked up three sacks and two recovered fumbles. He'll be aided by edge rusher Bradley Chubb, who returns from ACL surgery that made him miss nearly the entire 2024 season.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

Even with the distractions, receiver **Tyreek Hill** is still the big mover and shaker on this team. He boasts the third-fastest speed of any current NFL player and racked up 959 yards and six TDs in what may be considered an “off season” last year. —*MH*

AFC EAST

NEW YORK JETS

2024 WRAP-UP

Aaron Rodgers' return to the Jets after a year of injury was a disaster—the team started at 2–1 before imploding and sputtering to a crushing 5–12 record. It was a failure of epic proportions for a team that owner Woody Johnson branded his most talented in 25 years of ownership.

2025 OUTLOOK

With Rodgers jettisoned, the Jets have put Bears and Steelers reject Justin Fields in the pilot's seat. The team has a heralded new coach in former Lions defensive coordinator Aaron Glenn, and the hope is he'll restore discipline and a winning attitude. It's a heavy task ahead.

STATS

Head Coach
Aaron Glenn
2024 Record
5–12, finished third in division and failed to qualify for the playoffs
Offensive Leaders Aaron Rodgers, 584 attempts, 368 completions, 3,897 yards; Breece Hall, 209 attempts, 876 yards
Defensive Leaders Jamien Sherwood, 158 tackles; two players with 2 interceptions; Will McDonald, 10.5 sacks

> “Not much to say about the Jets that most unhinged New York fans haven't spewed. But they are definitely better under new coach Aaron Glenn.”
>
> Dan Graziano

GAINS

Head coach Aaron Glenn (below) is a big get. Graziano calls the former Lions' defensive coordinator “an up-and-comer in coaching circles.” The team drafted OT Armand Membou in the first round; he will help protect new QB Justin Fields. WR Josh Reynolds also joins the Jets.

LOSSES

The biggest loss, if one can even call it that, is Aaron Rodgers (now with the Steelers), and with him goes the circus of last season. Also now gone are linebacker C.J. Mosley and wide receiver Davante Adams (both released), plus safety Ashtyn Davis, who signed with Miami.

2025: ONES TO WATCH

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THE ACE

“I'm a big **Garrett Wilson** fan,” says ESPN national NFL insider Dan Graziano of the wide receiver (right). “He's a special player who just hasn't had consistent quarterback play to benefit from. Justin Fields in Chicago gave DJ Moore a pretty good season at receiver, so the quarterback has the talent to help make Wilson a superstar!”

THE PLAYMAKER

Graziano believes in **Justin Fields**. “The Steelers' coaches liked the progress he was making. They felt there was more to give.” Fields himself has spoken of his confidence: “I think the sky's the limit for this team.”

THE DRIVE STOPPER

“That man is **Quinnen Williams**,” suggests Graziano. “They still have a lot of good players on that defense, and they revolve around him,” he adds of the defensive tackle who delivered an impressive 25 solo tackles and six sacks.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

CB **Sauce Gardner** had an up and down 2024. He started slow and gathered steam but was bothered late by hamstring issues. Still, he's the anchor of the defensive backfield. *—MH*

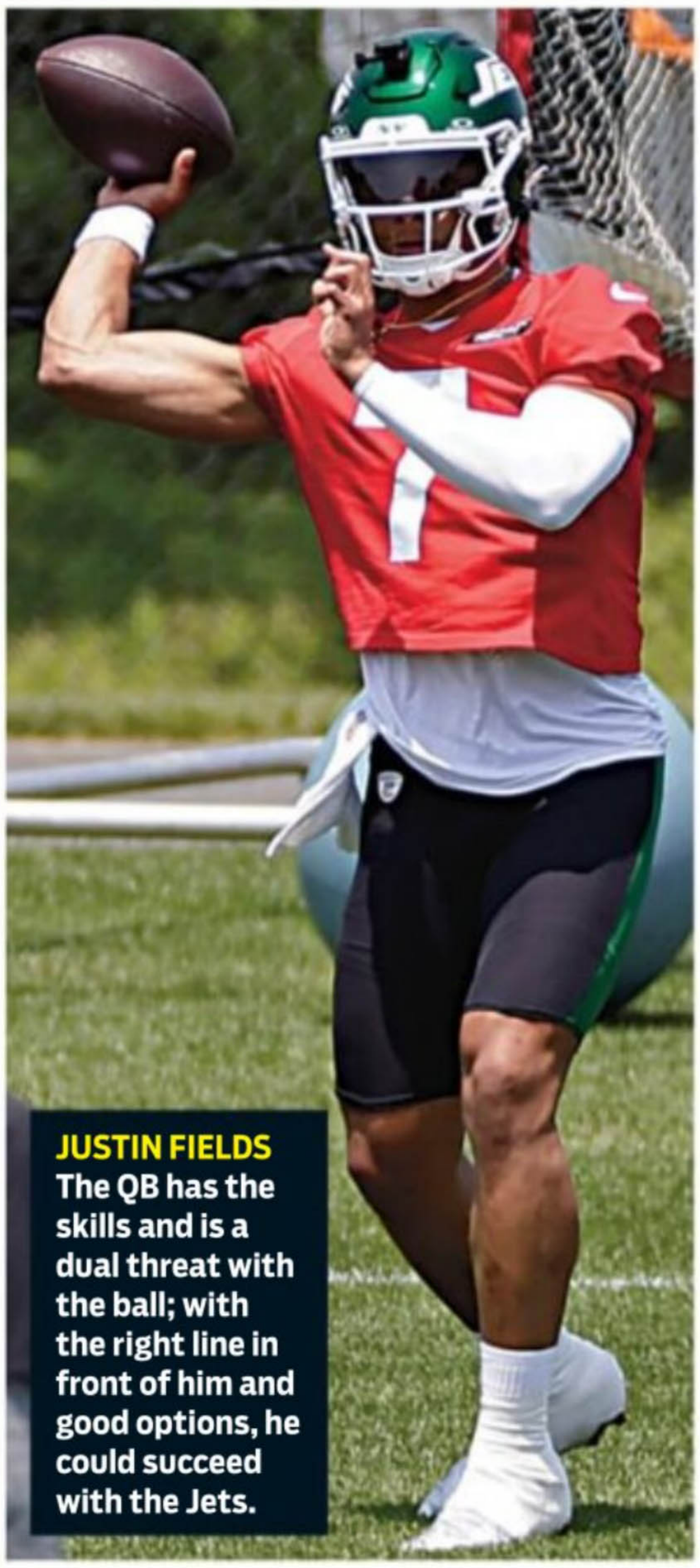
LEFT: ED MULHOLLAND/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: PERRY KNOTTS/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

ARMAND MEMBOU
Versatile, quick, powerful and athletic are the words that come to mind for the Day 1 draftee from Missouri.

BREECE HALL
The first running back taken in the 2022 draft has been solid on the ground but is still looking for a breakout season with the team.

JAMIEN SHERWOOD
The linebacker's numbers have continued to rise, and a three-year contract should incentivize last season's NFL solo tackles leader.



JUSTIN FIELDS
The QB has the skills and is a dual threat with the ball; with the right line in front of him and good options, he could succeed with the Jets.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TODD ROSENBERG/GETTY IMAGES; MIKE EHRMANN/GETTY IMAGES; AP PHOTO/ADAM HUNGER; AL PEREIRA/GETTY IMAGES

AFC EAST

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

2024 WRAP-UP

The Patriots dynasty officially hit rock bottom last season with a dismal 4–13 record, leading to the sudden sacking of first-year head coach Jerod Mayo, who was a longtime assistant under legendary former head man Bill Belichick, and handpicked by owner Robert Kraft.

2025 OUTLOOK

The Pats have a proven new coach in Mike Vrabel, several new free agent signings on the defensive side of the ball to suit the former linebacker coach's personality and a much easier row to hoe with the second-easiest schedule in the league according their opponents' projected win totals.

STATS

Head Coach
Mike Vrabel

2024 Record 4–13, finished fourth in division and failed to qualify for the playoffs

Offensive Leaders Drake Maye, 338 attempts, 225 completions, 2,276 yards; Rhamondre Stevenson, 207 attempts, 801 yards

Defensive Leaders Jahlani Tavai, 115 tackles; Christian Gonzalez, 2 interceptions; Deatrich Wise Jr., 5 sacks

> “This is a troubled team making moves in the right direction. Hiring Mike Vrabel and seeing quarterback Drake Maye rise are encouraging signs.”
>
> Dan Graziano

GAINS

“It's Mike Vrabel,” Graziano says of their biggest team gain. “His Tennessee teams were consistently good. He's the type of the coach that will win more games than the talent he has been given.” Other new Pats: WR Stefon Diggs, DT Milton Williams (left) and LB Robert Spillane.

LOSSES

“They won four games last year,” Graziano says. “Anybody who left will likely not be missed.” That may be true, but departures include QB Jacoby Brissett, DT Davon Godchaux and CB Jonathan Jones, with team sacks leader Deatrich Wise Jr. leaving for the Commanders.

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

“**Drake Maye** is the key,” says ESPN national NFL insider Dan Graziano of the quarterback, who raised hopes with his positive performance last year. “He has to continue to develop. But with the Patriots it'll be what else they do. Have they built enough offensive infrastructure around him to let him be successful?”

THE PLAYMAKER

There haven't been many since Tom Brady. But drafting star Ohio State running back **TreVeyon Henderson** (right), the 38th overall pick, is key. Combined with LSU offensive tackle Will Campbell at No. 4, the offensive arsenal has potential to be a lot better.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

“They gave a big contract to **Milton Williams**, who was a big star for the Eagles in the Super Bowl last year,” Graziano says. “He had three teams bidding on him and the numbers were very high. He's going to be counted on to deliver on that contract.”

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

“Hopefully it's **Harold Landry**,” says Graziano of the linebacker they acquired from Tennessee. In 17 games, Landry totaled nine sacks, 15 quarterback hits, 15 tackles for loss and four pass breakups. “Vrabel knows him from Tennessee, he'll know how to deploy him. He's a former first-round pick. He should help a lot.” *—MH*

LEFT: JOHN TLUMACKI/THE BOSTON GLOBE VIA GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: DANIELLE PARHIZKARAN/THE BOSTON GLOBE VIA GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

MILTON WILLIAMS
With a four-year, $104 million contract and a Super Bowl ring with last year's Eagles, the DE will bring confidence and skill to the defense.

CHRISTIAN GONZALEZ
A second-team All-Pro last season, the cornerback recorded two interceptions to go with 59 total tackles and 11 pass deflections.

DRAKE MAYE
A Pro Bowler in his rookie season, last year's No. 3 pick put up fine numbers, including 421 rushing yards, giving the Pats hope for the near future.

ROBERT SPILLANE
Another good get for the Pats was this linebacker from the Raiders, a proven team leader and reliable tackler with a good football IQ.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES; KARA DURRETTE/GETTY IMAGES; JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES; WINSLOW TOWNSON/GETTY IMAGES

AFC NORTH

BALTIMORE RAVENS

2024 WRAP-UP

The Ravens outscored opponents 518 to 361 and won the division. They played exciting ball and were always a force, but falling to the Bills in the playoffs after their wild card triumph over the rival Steelers hurt. That dropped two-point conversion pass still haunts Ravens Nation.

2025 OUTLOOK

Baltimore boasts several under-25 rising stars—Nate Wiggins, Isaiah Likely, Zay Flowers and Kyle Hamilton among them—heightening expectations. Lamar Jackson is just 28, but will Pittsburgh under Aaron Rodgers be able to steal the division? And can an aging Derrick Henry still perform?

STATS

Head Coach John Harbaugh

2024 Record 12–5; finished first in the division, lost to Buffalo in the divisional playoffs

Offensive Leaders Lamar Jackson, 474 attempts, 316 completions, 4,172 yards; Derrick Henry, 325 attempts, 1,921 yards

Defensive Leaders Roquan Smith, 154 tackles; Marlon Humphrey, 6 interceptions; Kyle Van Noy, 12.5 sacks

> I really like Baltimore. I think they're more balanced than the other teams in the division and I think they should win again.
>
> **Mike Tannenbaum**

GAINS

The Ravens signed veteran wide receiver DeAndre Hopkins (below). The five-time Pro Bowler got a one-year deal after playing last season for the Chiefs. The Ravens also signed LB Jake Hummel and backup QB Cooper Rush. Key draft picks include safety Malaki Starks.

LOSSES

Offensive lineman Patrick Mekari signed with the Jaguars, while CB Brandon Stephens joined the Jets. The loss that could come back to haunt them, however, is LB Malik Harrison, who now plays for the rival Steelers. Another departed linebacker is Chris Board, grabbed by the Giants.

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

Lamar Jackson is already a two-time league MVP and he's coming off his finest statistical season yet. He was tied for second in the NFL with 41 touchdowns, and threw only four interceptions all season. He was also Baltimore's second-leading rusher, scrambling for 915 yards, and is a tremendous leader on and off the field. "Lamar," says ESPN analyst Mike Tannenbaum, putting it succinctly, "is clearly one of the best players in the league."

THE PLAYMAKER

Tannenbaum goes with a surprise pick: wide receiver **Zay Flowers** (right). Standing all of 5-foot-9, Flowers broke team records as a rookie in 2023 and earned his first Pro Bowl selection last year. He won't even turn 25 until game two.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

It's difficult to argue with another Tannenbaum selection, even if some might consider it a bit of a surprise: safety **Kyle Hamilton**. Entering his fourth season, Hamilton has already amassed 186 solo tackles, 64 assists and seven sacks, along with five interceptions. And the best news: He's younger than Zay Flowers.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

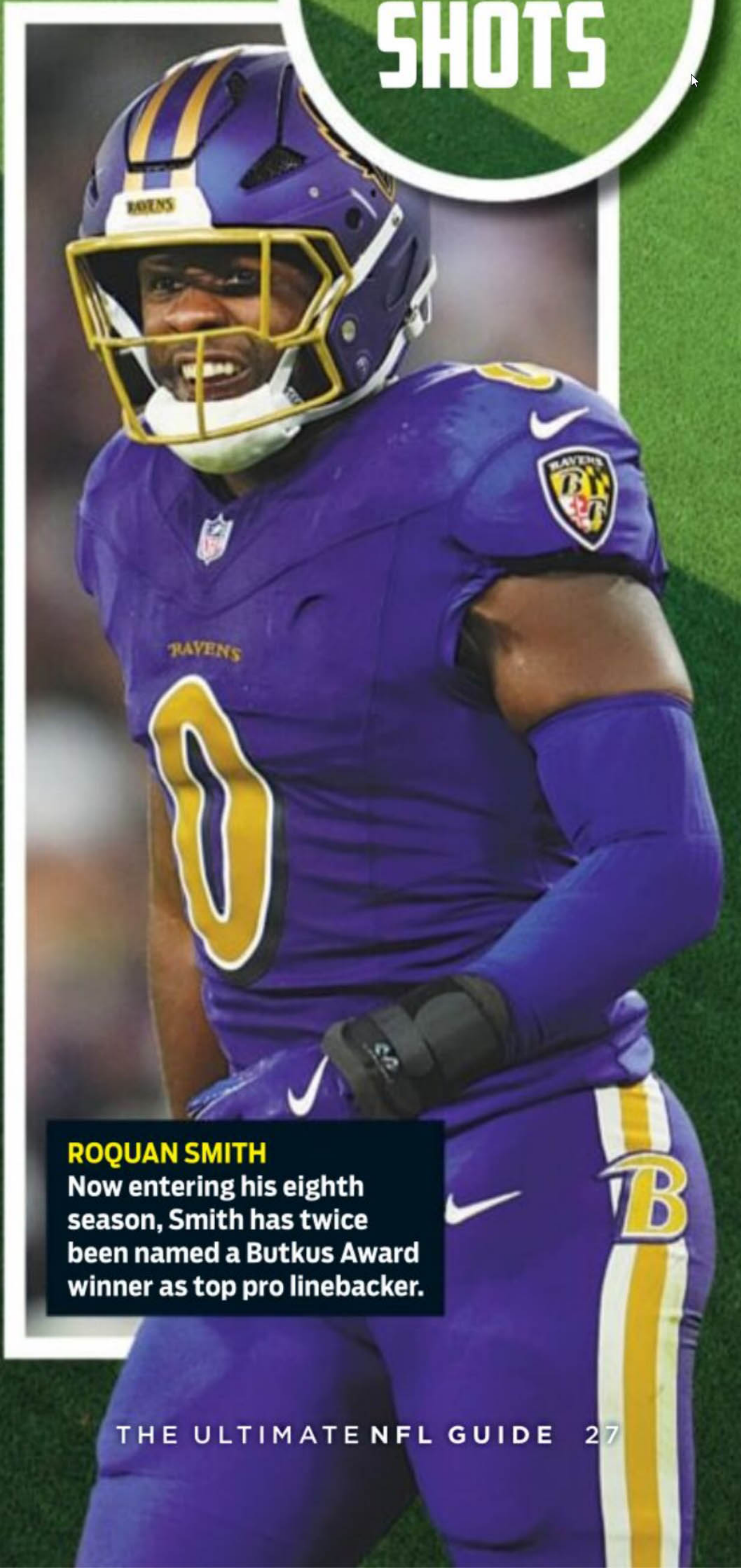
Running back Derrick Henry opens the playing field more than ever for Jackson. How? Last year, his first with Baltimore, he set a career high with a 5.9 yards-per-carry average during the regular season. He upped that to 6.4 in the playoffs. *—Ian Spelling*

LEFT: COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: G FIUME/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

LAMAR JACKSON
The incomparable Jackson is the only quarterback to rush for more than 1,000 yards twice in his career—so far.

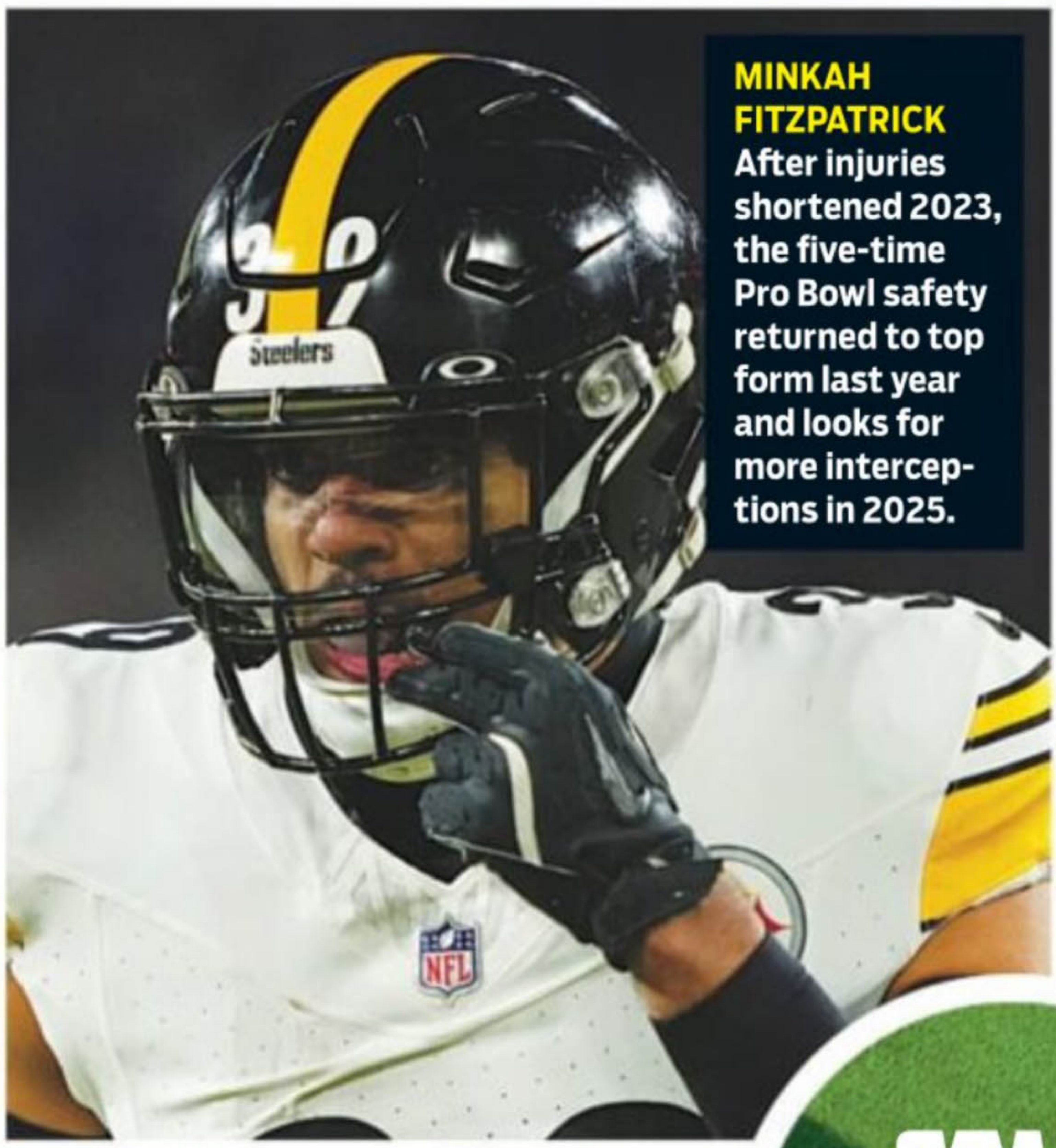
DERRICK HENRY
The running back's 5.9 yards per carry was first among the league's leading rushers; he tied for first with 16 touchdowns.



ROQUAN SMITH
Now entering his eighth season, Smith has twice been named a Butkus Award winner as top pro linebacker.

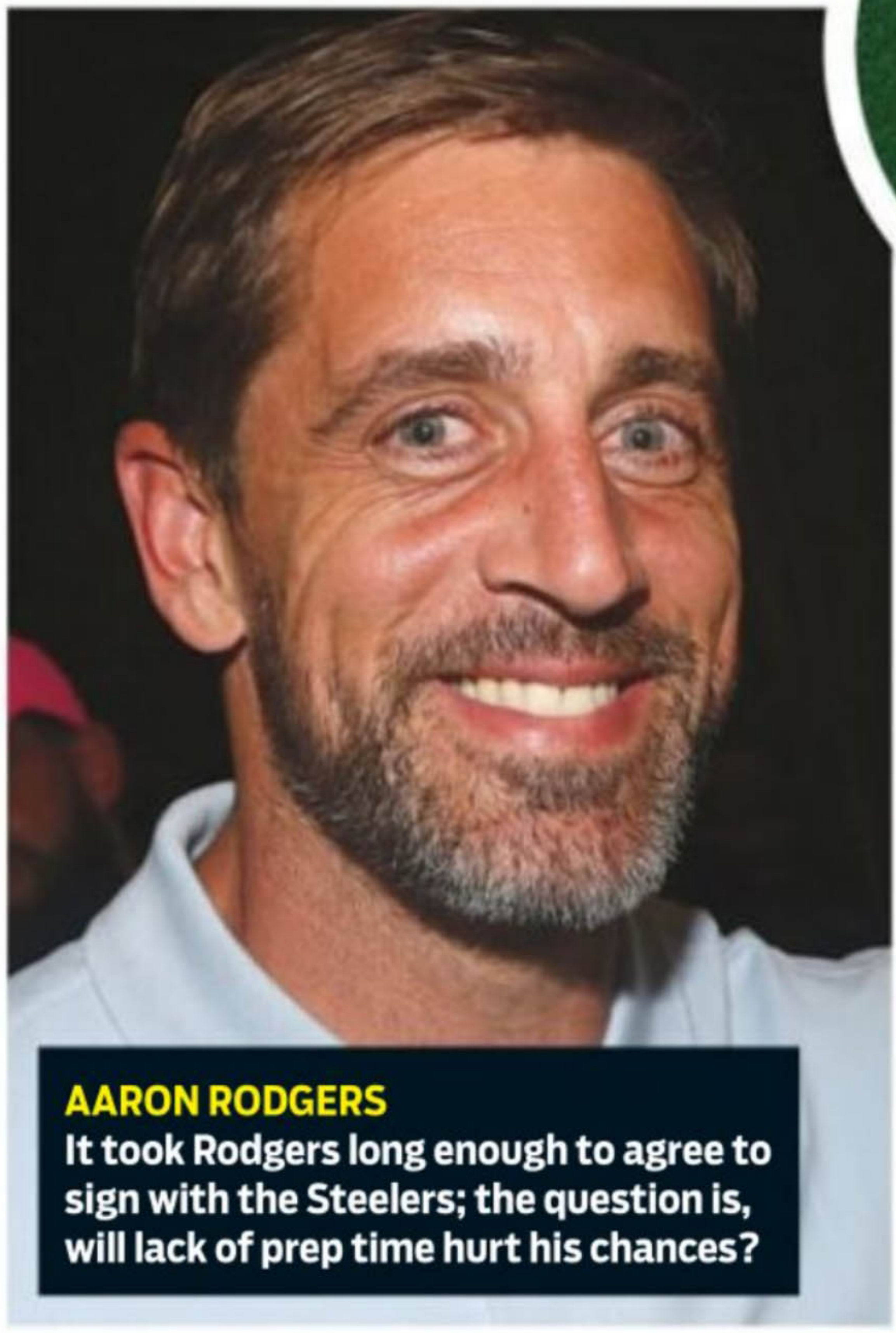
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: DYLAN BUELL/GETTY IMAGES; COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES; AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

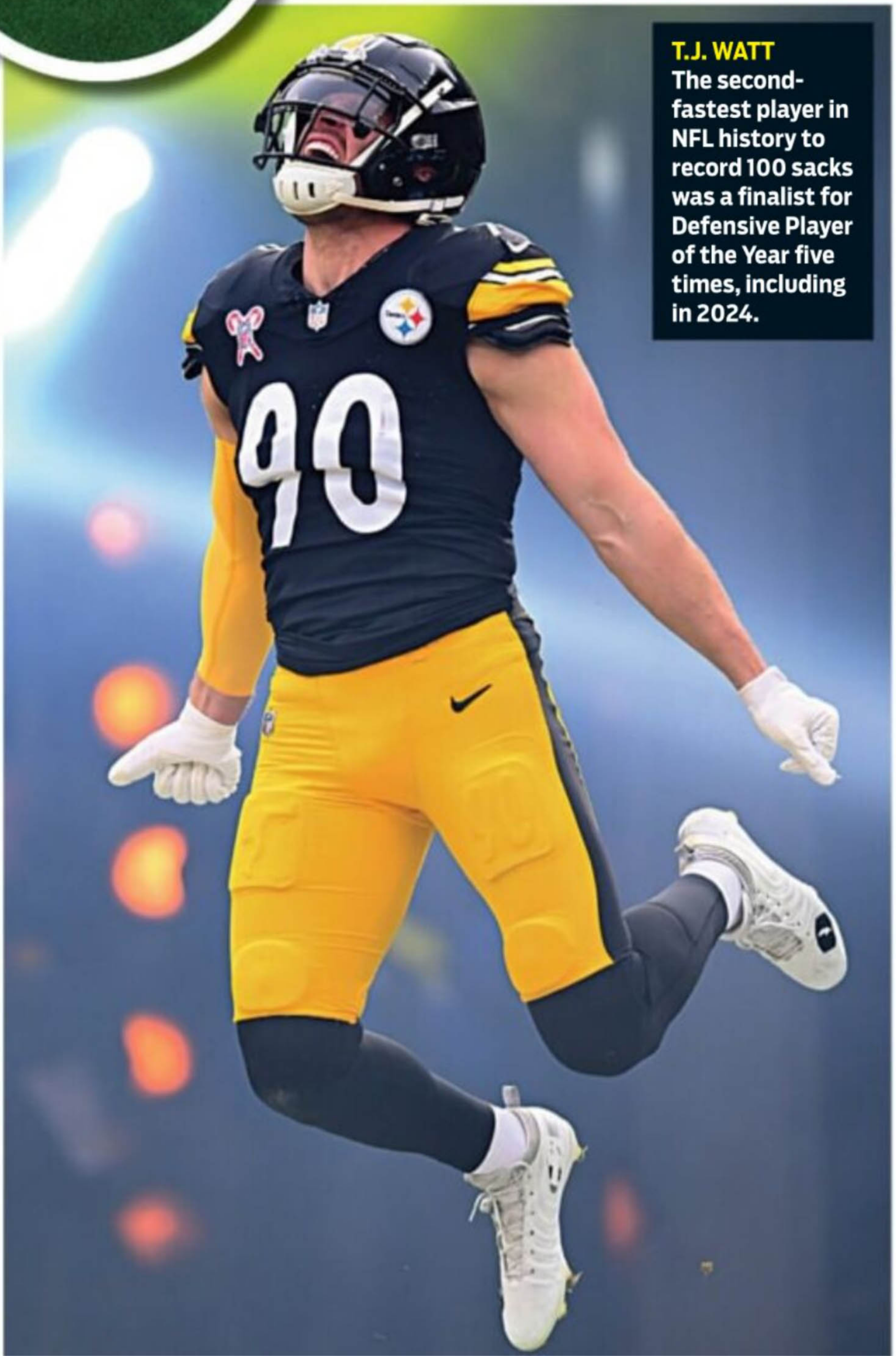


MINKAH FITZPATRICK After injuries shortened 2023, the five-time Pro Bowl safety returned to top form last year and looks for more interceptions in 2025.

KALEB JOHNSON The third-round pick in 2025 was Big Ten division running back of the year, and the Steelers look for him to hit the ground running in the NFL.



AARON RODGERS It took Rodgers long enough to agree to sign with the Steelers; the question is, will lack of prep time hurt his chances?



T.J. WATT The second-fastest player in NFL history to record 100 sacks was a finalist for Defensive Player of the Year five times, including in 2024.

CHRIS BOSWELL Last season's Pro Bowl kicker led the league in field goals made and total points with 158.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES; ROGER WIMMER/ISI PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES; JOE SARGENT/GETTY IMAGES; MICHAEL OWENS/GETTY IMAGES; BRUCE GLIKAS/WIREIMAGE

PITTSBURGH STEELERS

AFC NORTH

2024 WRAP-UP

The 18th campaign under Mike Tomlin saw a solid and promising Steelers team run out of steam, as a 10–3 start crumbled into a disappointing 10–7 record and a wild-card defeat. Eight players, including LB T.J. Watt, DT Cameron Heyward and QB Russell Wilson, earned Pro Bowl honors.

2025 OUTLOOK

Every guess about the Steelers' potential in 2025 changed in June with the signing of QB Aaron Rodgers. What that actually means for the Black and Gold hinges on which Rodgers turns up: the surefire Hall of Famer or the 41-year-old fading superstar who failed to restart the Jets.

STATS

Head Coach
Mike Tomlin

2024 Record 10–7; finished second in the division and lost to Baltimore in a wild-card game.

Offensive Leaders Russell Wilson, 336 attempts, 214 completions, 2,482 yards; Najee Harris, 263 attempts, 1,043 yards

Defensive Leaders Patrick Queen, 129 tackles, Donte Jackson, 5 interceptions; T.J. Watt, 11.5 sacks

> “Aaron Rodgers will give the Steelers everything he's got because he's close the end, obviously. But this is *not* the same Aaron Rodgers.”
>
> **Mike Tannenbaum**

GAINS

To help main gain Aaron Rodgers, the Steelers also traded for two-time Pro Bowl WR DK Metcalf (below) and signed DB Quindell Johnson, guard Nick Broeker, RB Max Hurleman and WR Montana Lemonious-Craig. Draft picks include DT Derrick Harmon and RB Kaleb Johnson.

LOSSES

Pittsburgh released DBs Ryan Watts and Joshuah Bledsoe, LB Preston Smith, DE Blake Mangelson and DT Montravius Adams Sr. LT Dan Moore Jr. signed with the Titans, QB Russell Wilson moved on to the Giants, QB Justin Fields is now a Jet and RB Najee Harris joined the Chargers

LEFT: JUSTIN K. ALLER/GETTY IMAGES.
RIGHT: JOE SARGENT/GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

Under **Mike Tomlin**, the Steelers have made the playoffs 12 times in the last 17 years and won Super Bowl XLIII. He's currently the NFL's longest-tenured coach. “If you've got a Hall of Fame coach,” ESPN analyst MIke Tannenbaum reasons, “I wouldn't get rid of him,” even if you haven't won a playoff game since 2017.

THE PLAYMAKER

DK Metcalf spent six years as a wide receiver in Seattle, registering between 900 and 1,303 receiving yards each season. He also scored five touchdowns for the Seahawks during his trio of playoff appearances. Tannenbaum expects the same from him now in Pittsburgh.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

“I am going to go with **Cam Heyward** (below) over T.J. Watt.” Tannenbaum says of the defensive tackle and linebacker, respectively. And that choice makes sense. Despite entering his 15th season at the age of 36, Heyward remains a remarkably durable, top-tier DT and perennial Pro Bowler.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

Aaron Rodgers has a lot to play for: pride, his legacy, redemption after his embarrassing Jets debacle and a likely final mega-payday. His one-year $13.6 million deal with the Steelers, $10 million of which is guaranteed, could reach $19.5 with incentives if he meets various goals. But first and foremost, the 41-year-old must win. *—IS*

CINCINNATI BENGALS

2024 WRAP-UP

The Bengals' 2024 season ranked as a true disappointment, despite QB Joe Burrow establishing career highs and leading the league in pass attempts, completions and yards. Cincinnati finished the season at 9–8 and missed the playoffs for the second year in a row.

2025 OUTLOOK

Cincinnati can only claw their way up this season, right? Probably. Their defense let them down in 2024, but the hope is that DE Trey Hendrickson and the Bengals will sign a new contract and that two highly touted rookies, DE Shemar Stewart and LB Demetrius Knight, will fulfill expectations.

STATS

Head Coach
Zac Taylor
2024 Record 9–8; finished third in division and failed to qualify for playoffs
Offensive Leaders Joe Burrow, 652 attempts, 460 completions, 4,918 yards; Chase Brown, 229 attempts, 990 yards
Defensive Leaders Germaine Pratt, 143 tackles; Geno Stone, 4 interceptions; Trey Hendrickson, 17.5 sacks

> “I think Cincinnati got better. Re-signing receivers Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins was great. And Shemar Stewart should be a great draft choice.”
>
> **Mike Tannenbaum**

GAINS

The team re-signed TE Mike Gesicki, punter Ryan Rehkow, DE Joseph Ossai, DT B.J. Hill and WR Tee Higgins. They extended WR Ja'Marr Chase's contract, brought in DT T.J. Slaton Jr., RB Samaje Perine and LB Oren Burks and drafted DE Shemar Stewart (left) and LB Demetrius Knight Jr.

LOSSES

LB Akeem Davis-Gaither signed with the Cardinals, OT Trent Brown departed to the Texans, DT Jay Tufele inked a deal with the Jets and RB Khalil Herbert bolted to the Colts. DE Sam Hubbard retired, while Cincinnati released guard Alex Cappa and DT Sheldon Rankins.

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

Joe Burrow enjoyed a personal season for the ages but nevertheless stood up as his team's leader to assume blame for the Bengals' lackluster 2024 results. “If I had played even better,” he noted, “we wouldn't have been in that spot we were in.” Of course, the blame can be spread.

THE PLAYMAKER

It would be difficult to argue with ESPN analyst Mike Tannenbaum's choice of wide receiver **Ja'Marr Chase**, whose league-leading 1,708 receiving yards were more than the thoroughly impressive totals of fellow wideout Tee Higgins and tight end Mike Gesicki combined.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

“I'll say **Trey Hendrickson**...assuming here's there,” Tannenbaum states of the Bengals' defensive end, who amassed 17.5 tackles and forced two fumbles in 2024. But as of press time he still hadn't closed a deal with Cincinnati for the 2025 season or beyond.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

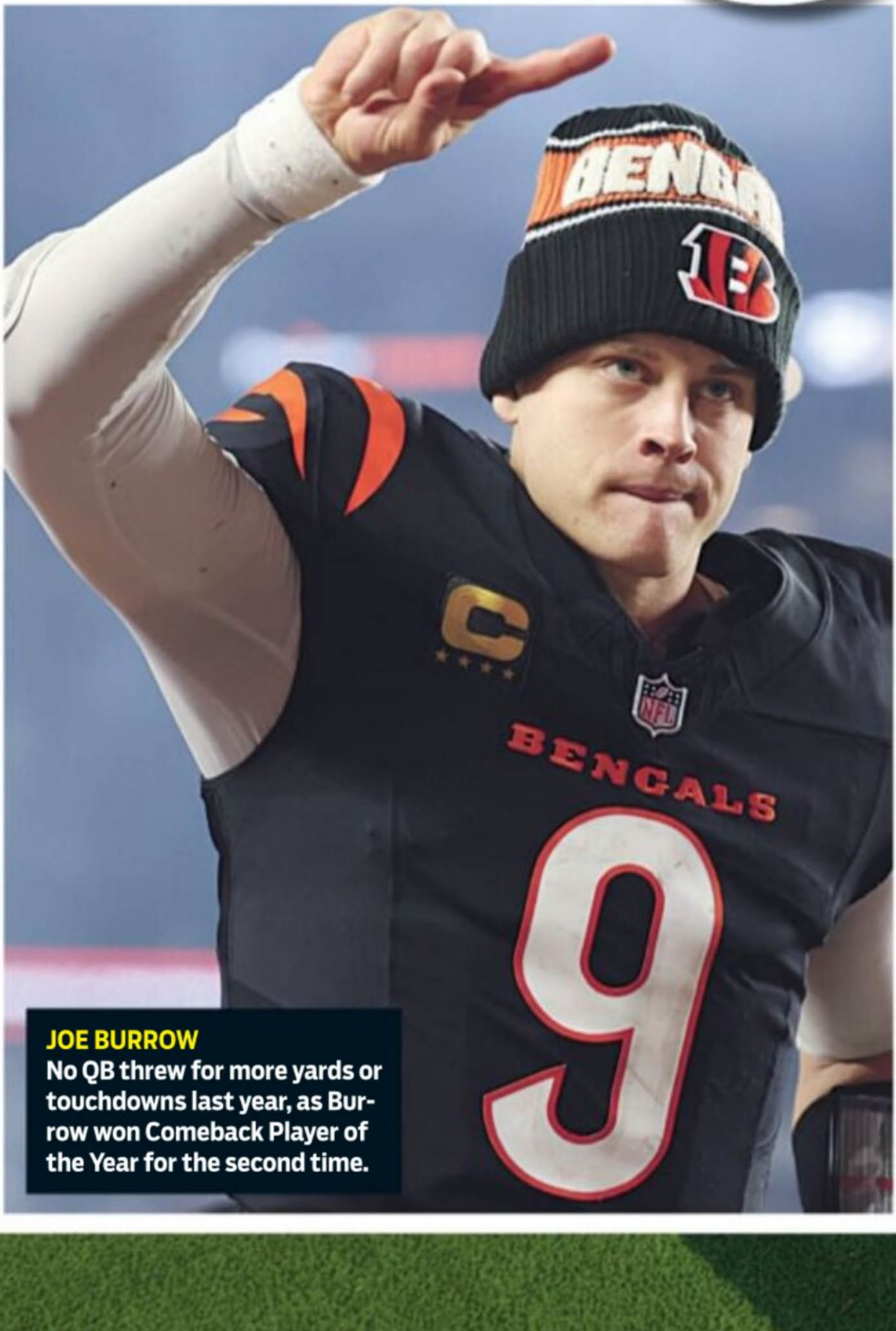
Tee Higgins (left) is as much a superstar as Chase—and the perfect complement out on the field for both Burrow and his fellow wide receiver. Last year, despite playing in only 12 games due to hamstring issues, he reeled in a career-high 10 receiving touchdowns and also brought in 73 passes—one below his career season-best total. *—IS*

LEFT: LOGAN BOWLES/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

LOGAN WILSON If the LB makes a scheduled recovery from knee surgery, he should return to a form that saw him be part of 135 tackles in 2023, forcing three fumbles.

TREY HENDRICKSON How valuable is this defensive end to the team? He led the league with 17.5 sacks, a number he also posted in 2023. He's in his prime for sure.

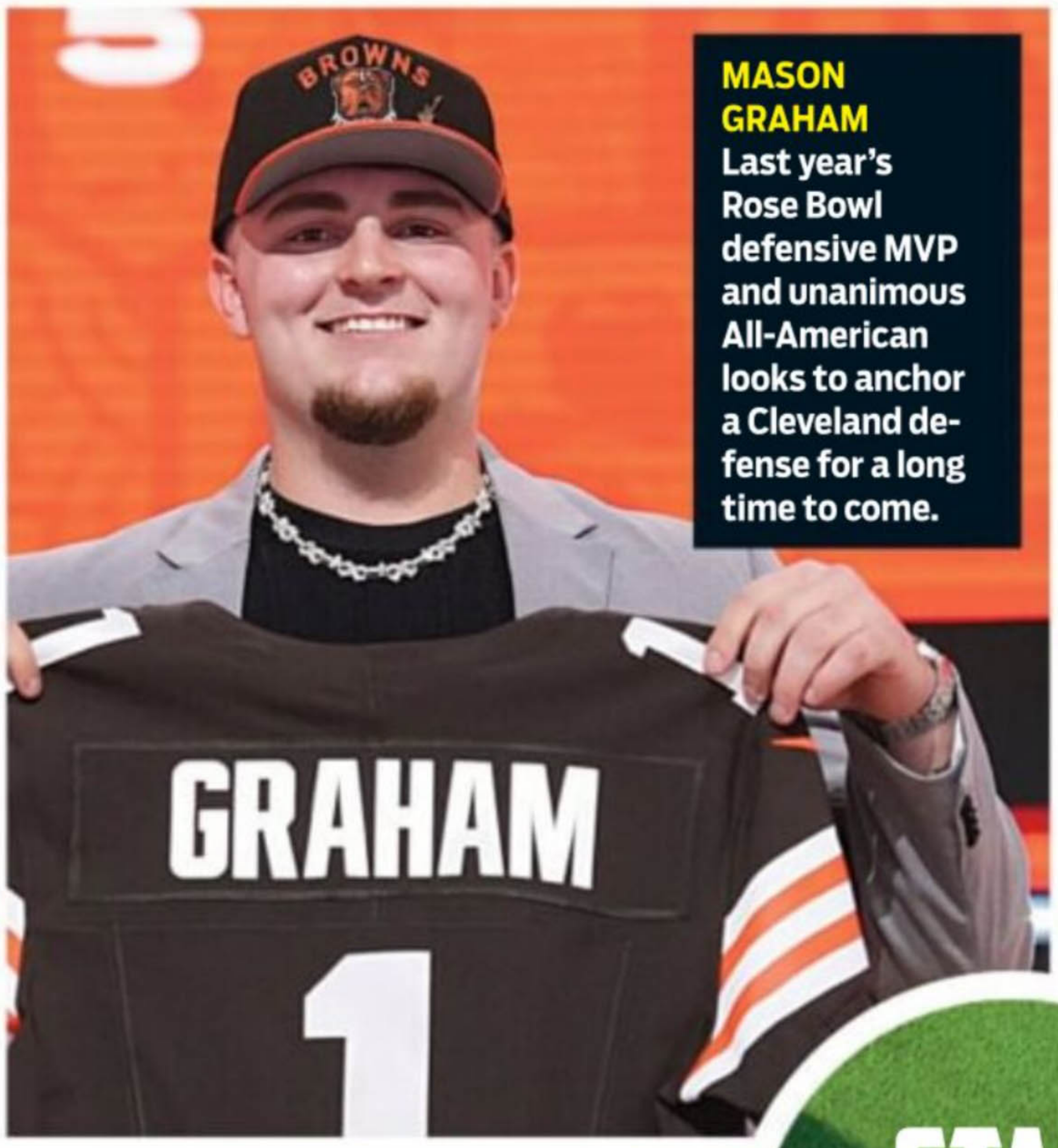


JOE BURROW No QB threw for more yards or touchdowns last year, as Burrow won Comeback Player of the Year for the second time.

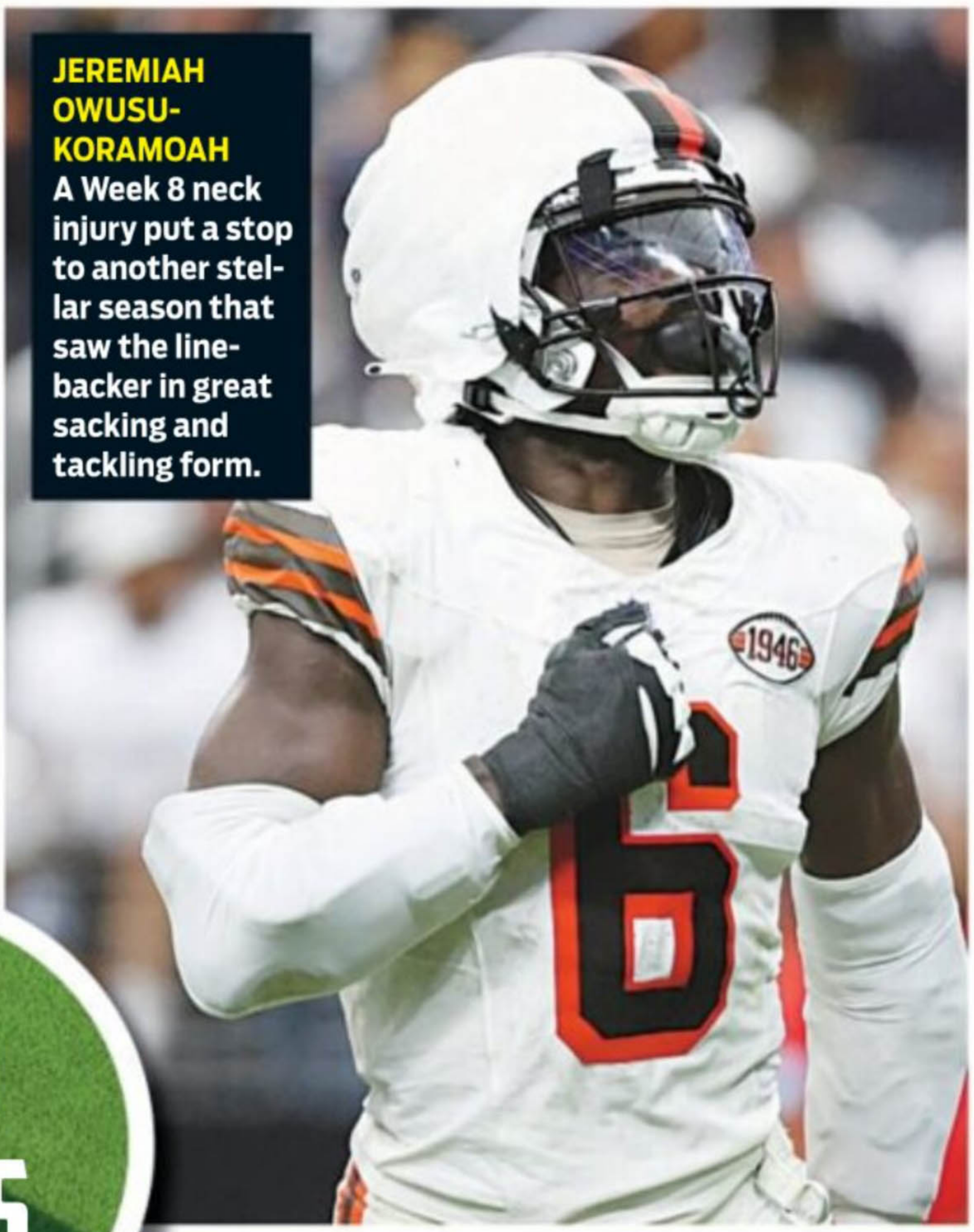
JA'MARR CHASE The four-time Pro Bowler led the NFL in receptions, touchdowns and receiving yards in 2024 and was the only WR to average over 100 yards per game.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: IAN JOHNSON/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES; DYLAN BUELL/GETTY IMAGES; ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES; JUSTIN K. ALLER/GETTY IMAGES

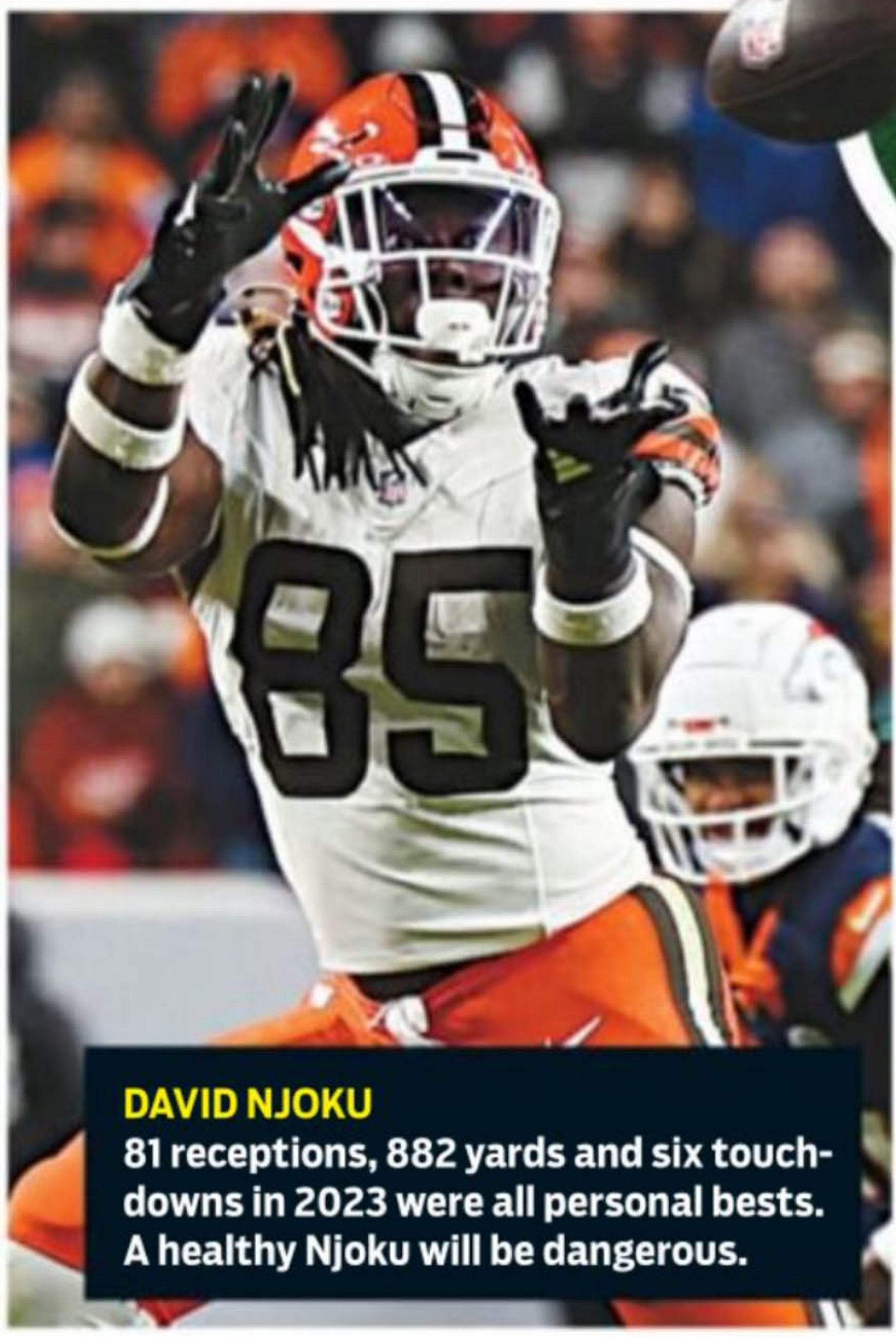
STAR SHOTS



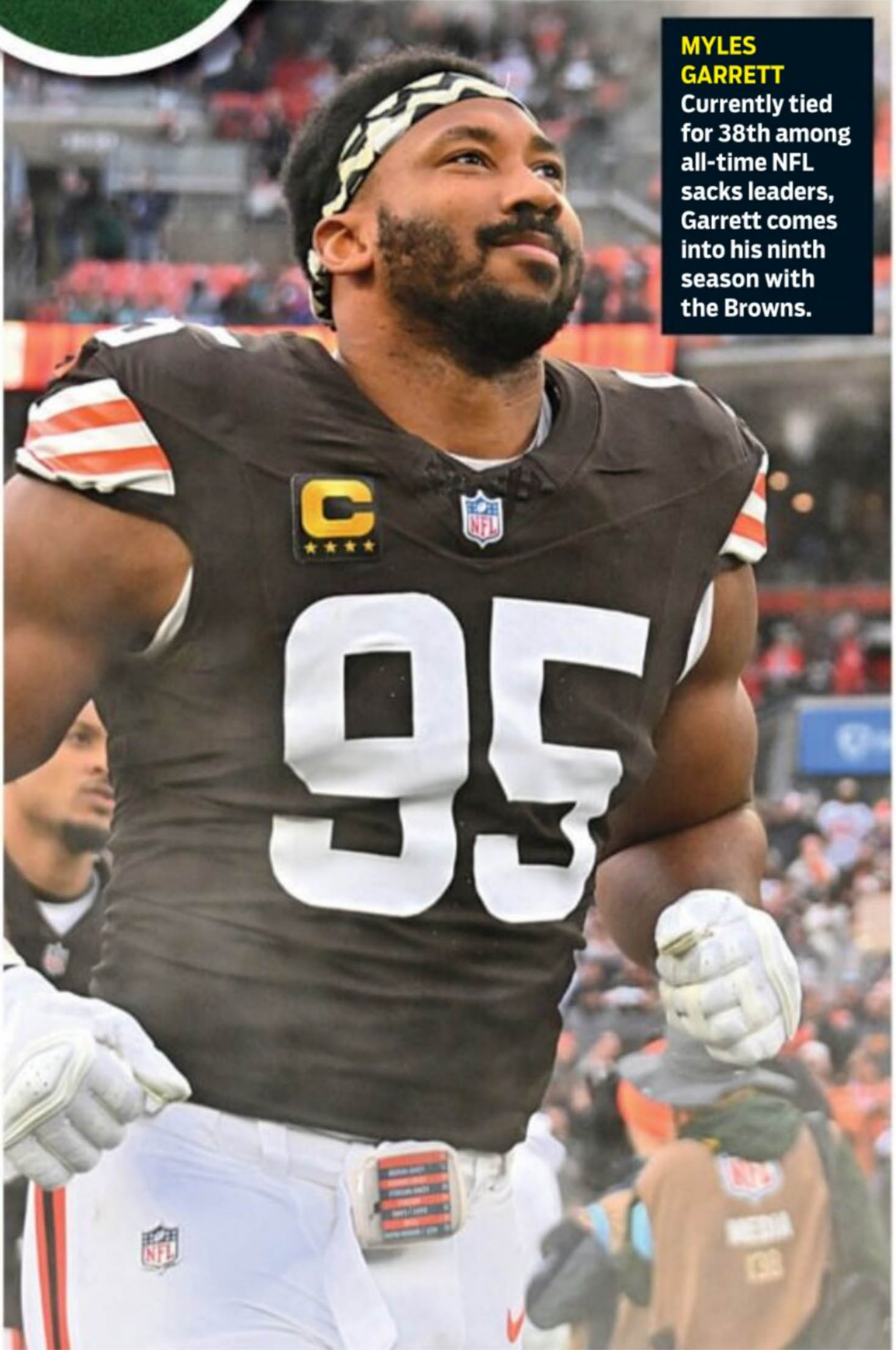
MASON GRAHAM
Last year's Rose Bowl defensive MVP and unanimous All-American looks to anchor a Cleveland defense for a long time to come.



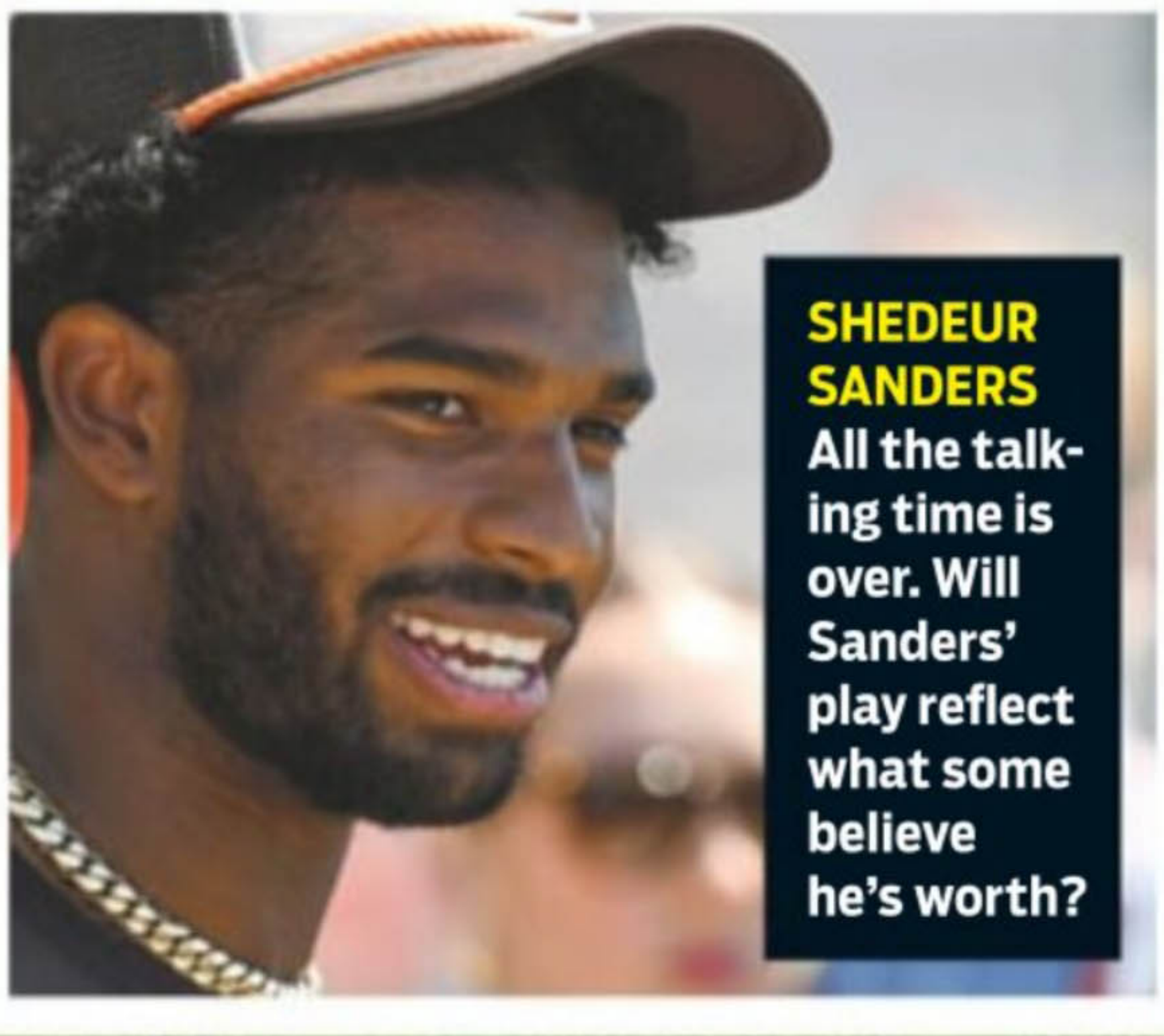
JEREMIAH OWUSU-KORAMOAH
A Week 8 neck injury put a stop to another stellar season that saw the linebacker in great sacking and tackling form.



DAVID NJOKU
81 receptions, 882 yards and six touchdowns in 2023 were all personal bests. A healthy Njoku will be dangerous.



MYLES GARRETT
Currently tied for 38th among all-time NFL sacks leaders, Garrett comes into his ninth season with the Browns.



SHEDEUR SANDERS
All the talking time is over. Will Sanders' play reflect what some believe he's worth?

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PERRY KNOTTS/GETTY IMAGES; IAN MAULE/GETTY IMAGES; JASON MILLER/GETTY IMAGES; NICK CAMMETT/GETTY IMAGES; PERRY KNOTTS/GETTY IMAGES

CLEVELAND BROWNS

AFC NORTH

2024 WRAP-UP

After reaching the playoffs in 2023, the wheels fell off the Browns' bus in 2024. They led the league in punts (89) and tied the Titans for most turnovers (34)—so, a whopping 70 percent of their drives ended in a punt or turnover. That made for a very tired defense and a 3–14 record.

2025 OUTLOOK

Cleveland's eight draft picks could transform this into more than a rebuilding year. ESPN analyst Mike Tannenbaum thinks QB Shedeur Sanders might be a wild card who delivers: "He should play from day one. He has a chance to be really good. They need to know what they have in him."

STATS

Head Coach Kevin Stefanski

2024 Record 3–14, finished fourth in the division and did not qualify for the playoffs

Offensive Leaders Jameis Winston, 296 attempts, 181 completions, 2,121 yards; Jerome Ford, 104 attempts, 565 yards

Defensive Leaders Grant Delpit, 111 tackles; Denzel Ward, 2 interceptions; Myles Garrett, 14 sacks

> "Cleveland drafted well on defense, and not only did they get two young quarterbacks, they got Jacksonville's first-round pick next year."
>
> **Mike Tannenbaum**

GAINS

The Browns drafted DT Mason Graham, RB Quinshon Judkins, LB Carson Schwesinger (below), QB Dillon Gabriel and, late in the going, controversial QB Shedeur Sanders, who could shine. They also signed free agent WR Diontae Johnson and QB Joe Flacco, trading for QB Kenny Pickett.

LOSSES

The Browns traded QB Dorian Thompson-Robinson and waived FB Eli Wilson, DE Marcus Haynes, safety Trey Dean and kicker Andre Szmyt. If Deshaun Watson recovers from his Achilles injury and beats out Cleveland's myriad quarterback options, is that a loss or a gain?

LEFT: RIC TAPIA/GETTY IMAGES.
RIGHT: NICK CAMMETT/DIAMOND IMAGES VIA GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

Veteran defensive end **Myles Garrett** remains a powerhouse. Last year, he logged 14 sacks and a career-high 40 solo tackles. After initially requesting a trade following the 2024 season, he signed a four-year extension and the timing could be pretty great if the team's new blood comes through.

THE PLAYMAKER

If the Browns haven't traded TE **David Njoku** before the season's start, and if he's recovered from the various injuries that limited him to 11 games in 2024, expect a return to Pro Bowl form. Yes, those are big ifs, but the payoff could be stellar as the man they call "Chief" is a field leader.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

"I'd go with **Mason Graham**," Tannenbaum says, "even though he's a rookie." Much like Tannenbaum, the Browns and their fanbase are counting on the University of Michigan standout defensive tackle and fifth overall draft pick to exceed expectations as a pro. The stout, well-rounded DT is regarded as a determined pass rusher and run-stopper.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

"If he plays well, **Jerry Jeudy** [left] will be a difference maker for them," Tannenbaum says, accidentally omitting a key word: *again*. Last year, his first with Cleveland, the speedy wide receiver hauled in 90 passes for 1,229 yards, both career highs. —*IS*

HOUSTON TEXANS

2024 WRAP-UP

They didn't make the next step and build on 2023, when QB C.J. Stroud blazed out of the gate, and coach DeMeco Ryans set a new culture. But they did do well before losing to a much better Chiefs team in the playoffs. That speaks to the gap between them and elite teams.

2025 OUTLOOK

One can expect the Texans to win nine or 10 games, or around the same as last season. They remain the team to beat in the AFC South, but the gap between them and the rest of the division has shrunk because they haven't made the personnel moves that would raise them to another level.

STATS

Head Coach DeMeco Ryans

2024 Record 10–7, finished first in division, lost to Kansas City in the divisional playoffs

Offensive Leaders C.J. Stroud, 532 attempts, 336 completions, 3,727 yards; Joe Mixon, 245 attempts, 1,016 yards

Defensive Leaders Henry To'oTo'o, 105 tackles; Calen Bullock, Derek Stingley Jr., 5 interceptions; Danielle Hunter, 12 sacks

> “The Texans have a Super Bowl–caliber defense, but the question is whether QB C.J. Stroud can get back to where he was as a rookie.”
>
> **Ben Arthur**

GAINS

Veteran safety C.J. Gardner-Johnson (traded from the Eagles) and LB E.J. Speed (signed from the Colts) will be integral parts of the defense, and WR Christian Kirk (signed after a trade with Jacksonville) will help on offense. And their deep draft began with WR Jayden Higgins.

LOSSES

The Texans traded five-time Pro Bowl left tackle Laremy Tunsil (above) to the Commanders; WR Stefon Diggs signed a three-year deal with the Patriots. And OL Kenyon Green was traded as part of the C.J. Gardner-Johnson deal. OG Shaq Mason was among those released.

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

At his best **C.J. Stroud** can be a Top 5 quarterback and maybe last year was a sophomore slump. If he can reassert himself as a leading QB, the Texans can challenge at the highest levels of the AFC. “It all starts with C.J.,” says Fox Sports AFC South reporter Ben Arthur. But the team must also be better at protecting the QB, who was second last season in sacks with 52.

THE PLAYMAKER

Along with the injured Tank Dell, **Nico Collins** has been Stroud's No. 1 target. “He's one of the best deep threats in the NFL,” says Arthur. “He can get behind the defense, go over the top and crush the soul of a defense with his size and ability to win 50-50 balls.” Collins made the 2025 Pro Bowl.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

Will Anderson Jr. (below) is coming off a stellar season with double-digit sacks. As he enters his third year, the question is whether the 2023 Defensive Rookie of the Year can become a superstar at edge. “That would help elevate a Super Bowl–caliber defense,” says Arthur.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

Arthur says the team's difference maker is only now ready to get started: “**C.J. Gardner-Johnson** is their big-time defensive addition from the Eagles. He's been an elite defensive back; having another playmaker on the back end of that defense could be key to making this the top defense in the NFL.” —*JK*

COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES (2)

STAR SHOTS

JOE MIXON
His first season with the Texans, traded after seven years with the Bengals, was business as usual—the RB gained over 1,000 yards.

NICO COLLINS
Missing more than a month last season with a hamstring injury didn't stop the wideout from another 1,000-yard receiving season.

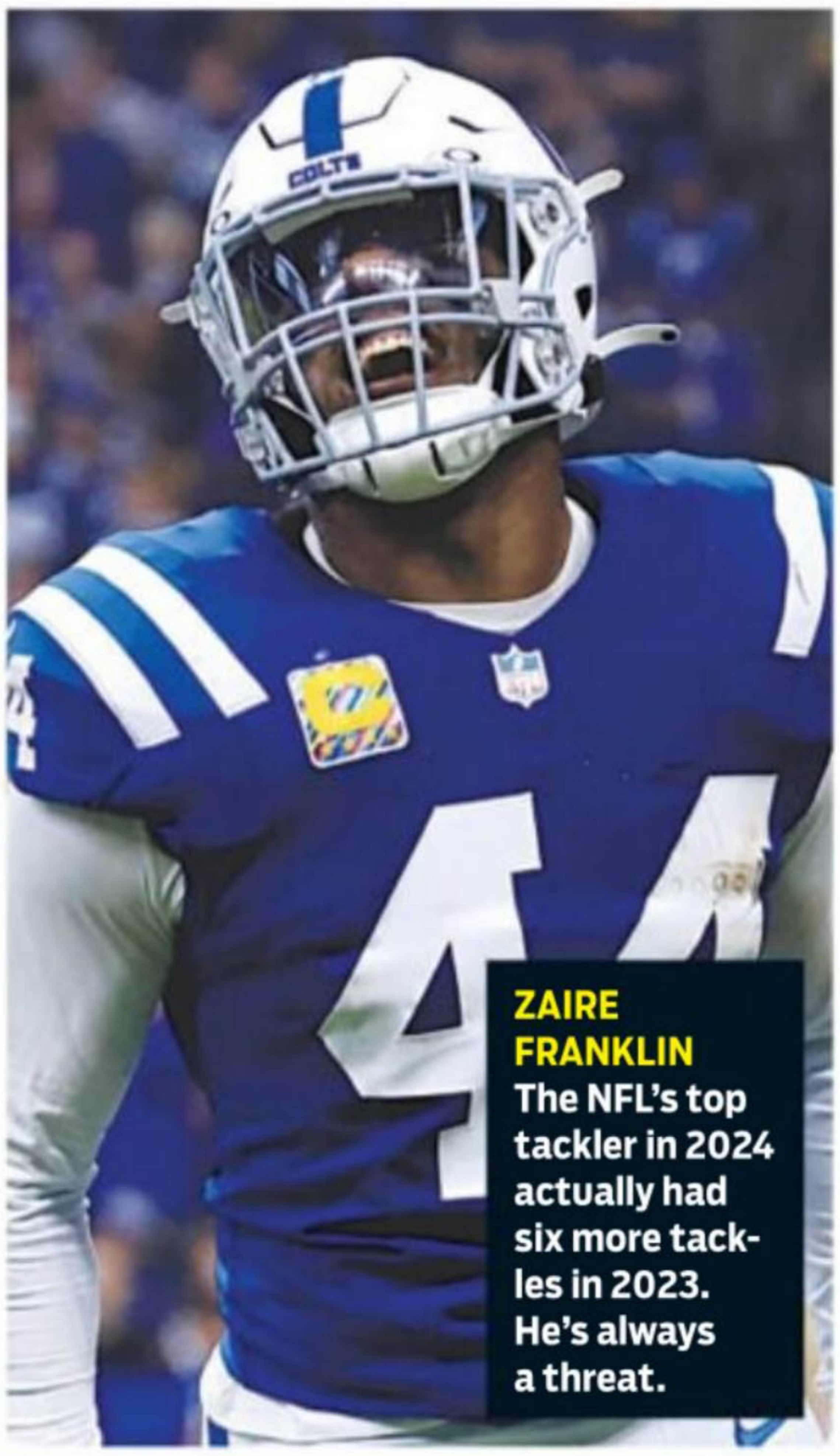
C.J. STROUD
The second overall pick of the 2023 draft and NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year struggled in 2024 and should improve with good weapons.

DEREK STINGLEY JR.
Now the highest-paid cornerback in NFL history, Stingley has hauled in five interceptions in each of the last two seasons, adding two more in the 2024 playoffs.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: WESLEY HITT/GETTY IMAGES; ALEX SLITZ/GETTY IMAGES; COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES; PERRY KNOTTS/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

JONATHAN TAYLOR
The rusher was back in true form last season (he'd led the league with 1,811 yards in 2021) and should be a major offensive factor again this season.



ZAIRE FRANKLIN
The NFL's top tackler in 2024 actually had six more tackles in 2023. He's always a threat.

ANTHONY RICHARDSON
The team's great hope at QB has been ineffective or sidelined by injuries, and the team is still looking to see his potential fully realized.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LUKE HALES/GETTY IMAGES; JUSTIN CASTERLINE/GETTY IMAGES; ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

AFC SOUTH

2024 WRAP-UP

Indianapolis took a step back last season and had another disappointing year, missing the playoffs for the fourth time in a row and having absolutely no more clarity at quarterback than they did when they drafted Anthony Richardson with the fourth pick of the 2023 draft.

2025 OUTLOOK

For the first time in a long time, we're seeing the Colts pursuing top free agents, and they got Tyler Warren, who could be a very special tight end. They also have Jonathan Taylor and a lot of depth on the defensive line. If they get solid quarterback play, they'll have a shot.

STATS

Head Coach
Shane Steichen
2024 Record 8–9, finished second in division, did not qualify for playoffs
Offensive Leaders Anthony Richardson, 264 attempts, 126 completions, 1,814 yards; Jonathan Taylor, 303 attempts, 1,431 yards
Defensive Leaders Zaire Franklin, 173 tackles; three players with 3 interceptions; Kwity Paye, 8 sacks

> “I'd keep an eye on Indy. They could challenge for the playoffs, which may surprise people because their QB situation remains unsettled.”
>
> **Ben Arthur**

GAINS

Penn State tight end Tyler Warren (below) was taken with the 14th pick of the draft, and CB Charvarius Ward will make a big difference. Underrated safety Camryn Bynum from Minnesota brings needed experience at that position to the Colts. Ex-Giants QB Daniel Jones also signed on.

LOSSES

Offensive linemen Will Fries and Ryan Kelly both went to the Vikings in the offseason. Also, the team's starting DE last season, Dayo Odeyingbo, signed with Chicago. And Warren will probably be filling the gap of TE Kylen Granson moving to the Eagles. And LB Grant Stuard departed.

LEFT: TODD ROSENBERG/GETTY IMAGES.
RIGHT: DYLAN BUELL/GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

The offense runs through **Jonathan Taylor**, who is one of the best running backs in the NFL and opens everything else up for them. “Knowing how uncertain the quarterback situation is, he's their most important player,” says Fox Sports AFC South reporter Ben Arthur.

THE PLAYMAKER

First-round pick **Tyler Warren** could establish himself as one of the best TEs in the NFL. He has Pro Bowl potential, and his versatility will make him a massive part of their offense.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

“Defensive tackle **DeForest Buckner** [left] is still one of the better players at his position in the NFL but has been super underrated for years,” says Arthur of the team leader, who posted 6.5 sacks last year and is a proven and consistent presence on the defensive line.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

Charvarius Ward will be their top cornerback. “He's performed at an elite level and can shadow the other team's No. 1 receiver and bring credibility to their defensive backfield,” says Arthur. Ward, signed in the offseason as a free agent, was extremely effective for the 49ers for two seasons until an injury slowed him in 2024. Adds Arthur, “He's a huge X factor for the Colts.” —*JK*

JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

2024 WRAP-UP

A forgettable season to be sure. Then–head coach Doug Pederson's message grew stale, they had one of the worst defenses in the NFL and they were without quarterback Trevor Lawrence for seven games, but even he just wasn't the player he's shown flashes of being in the past.

2025 OUTLOOK

Look for them to be marginally better. New coach Liam Coen immediately makes them better on offense, but they had the worst pass defense in the NFL. Drafting Travis Hunter was key, with the hope that he may be a two-way star, but they did nothing to address their pass rush or their depth.

STATS

Head Coach
Liam Coen
2024 Record 4–13, finished third in division and did not qualify for playoffs
Offensive Leaders Trevor Lawrence, 284 attempts, 172 completions, 2,045 yards; Tank Bigsby, 168 attempts, 766 yards
Defensive Leaders Devin Lloyd, 113 tackles; 6 players with 1 interception; Travon Walker, 10.5 sacks

> “They were a mess last year with a lot of issues on both sides of the ball. With a new coach and GM, they have a lot of work to do.”
>
> **Ben Arthur**

GAINS

No gain is more exciting than Travis Hunter; the Jags moved up from the No. 5 spot in the draft to get him. They also signed Ravens guard Patrick Mekari and Bucs center Robert Hainsey to add O-line depth. And Dyami Brown, a WR from the Commanders, will help as a deep threat.

LOSSES

Wideout Christian Kirk (above), who missed time last year with an injury, was traded to the Texans, and the Broncos picked up TE Evan Engram after he was released by the Jags. Center Mitch Morse retired, TE Luke Farrell signed with the 49ers and CB Ronald Darby was released.

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

The team needs **Trevor Lawrence** to get back on track. “We've seen him play at high levels before, but we never saw that consistency,” says Fox Sports AFC South reporter Ben Arthur. “Now he'll have the weapons with [WR] Brian Thomas Jr. and [standout draft pick] Travis Hunter, but he just needs to get more consistent.”

THE PLAYMAKER

Brian Thomas Jr. was a big-time rookie last year and, aside from the Giants' Malik Nabers, was the best rookie pass catcher in the NFL with 87 receptions and 10 TDs. Says Arthur, “His production should get better with a year under his belt, and he'll continue to ascend.”

THE DRIVE STOPPER

Josh Hines-Allen (below) has been good for at least seven sacks a season and posted a career-best 17.5 of them in 2023. “At his best,” confirms Arthur, “he can be a Top 5 pass rusher. He sets the tone for the entire defense.”

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

It's no surprise that the team has a lot invested in No. 2 overall pick **Travis Hunter**, whom they're banking on to be that rare unicorn player on both sides of the ball. The Heisman Trophy–winning cornerback and wide receiver may be the X factor on this team, a player the Jags can truly depend on. —*JK*

LEFT: MIKE CARLSON/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: MITCHELL LEFF/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

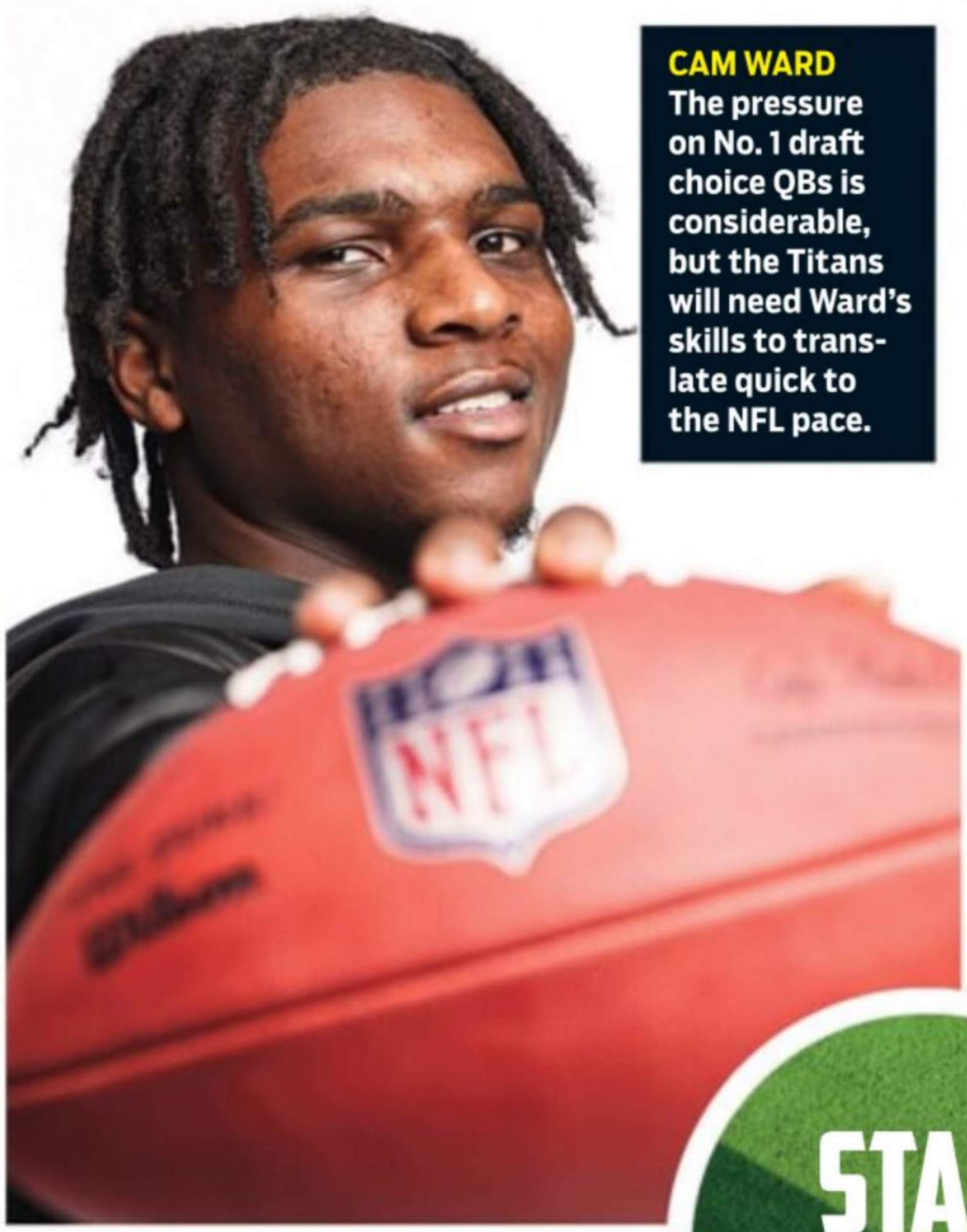
BRIAN THOMAS JR.
A top choice in a 2024 draft rich in WR talent, Thomas made the Pro Bowl on the strength of his 87 catches and 10 TDs.

TRAVIS HUNTER
Hunter is the only player in college football history to win awards for both defensive player of the year and best receiver of the year.

TREVOR LAWRENCE
The 2021 top pick of the draft is no doubt relieved to put last season's disappointments behind him and begin with better targets than he's had in a long time.

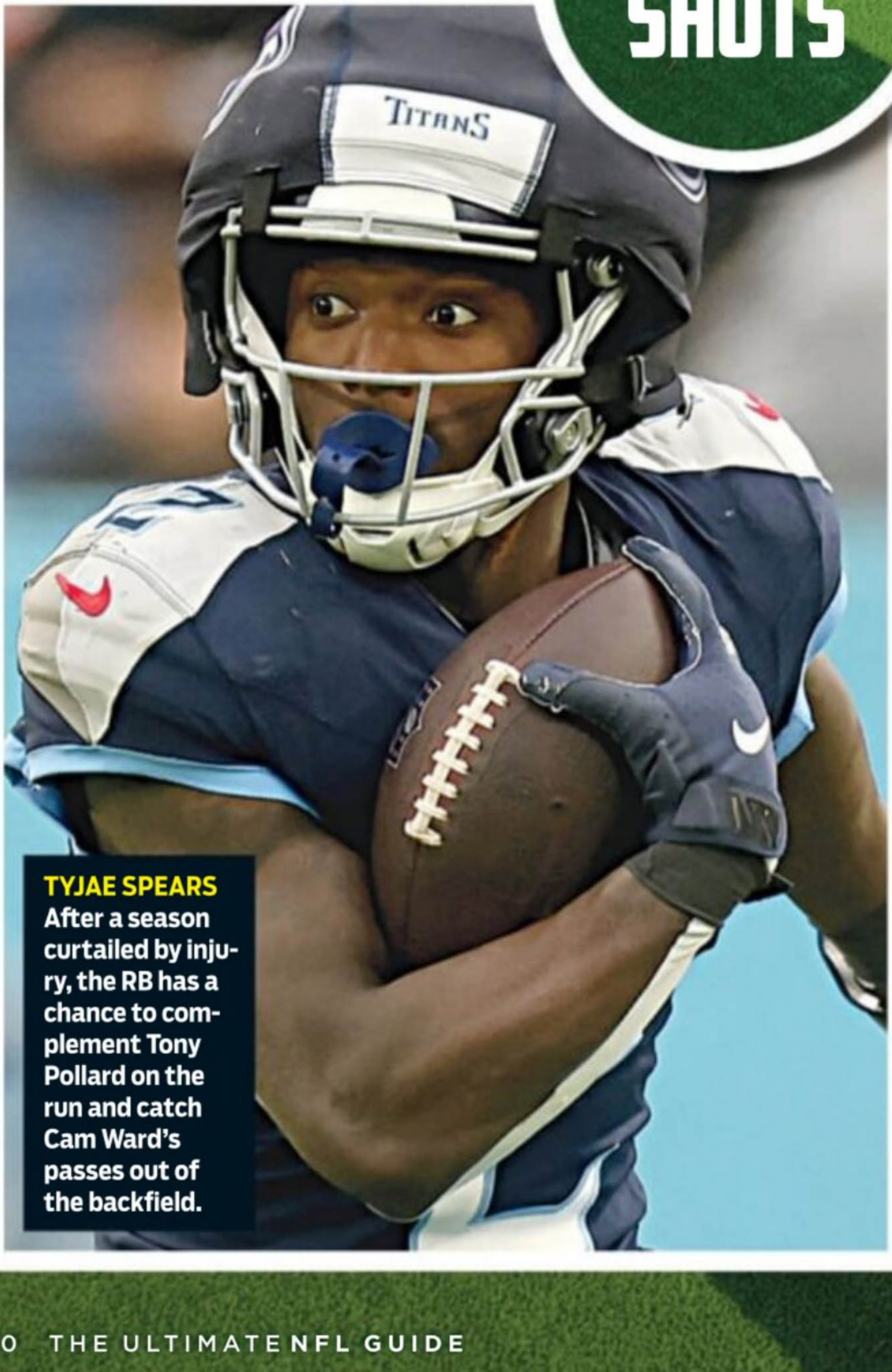
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TODD ROSENBERG/GETTY IMAGES; STACY REVERE/GETTY IMAGES; MIKE CARLSON/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS



CAM WARD
The pressure on No. 1 draft choice QBs is considerable, but the Titans will need Ward's skills to translate quick to the NFL pace.

TONY POLLARD
The ex-Cowboy proved Dallas' short-sightedness with a stellar 1,079-yard 2024 season.



TYJAE SPEARS
After a season curtailed by injury, the RB has a chance to complement Tony Pollard on the run and catch Cam Ward's passes out of the backfield.

JEFFERY SIMMONS
In his last playoff game—in 2021, when the Titans were great—he posted three sacks and eight tackles. He's itching to get back.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TODD ROSENBERG/GETTY IMAGES; DANIELLE PARHIZKARAN/THE BOSTON GLOBE VIA GETTY IMAGES; WESLEY HITT/GETTY IMAGES; ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES

TENNESSEE TITANS

AFC SOUTH

2024 WRAP-UP

It was a disaster of a first year for head coach Brian Callahan. The team certainly learned that Will Levis wasn't the answer at quarterback and that they didn't have any real depth to speak of at receiver, edge and so many other positions. It ultimately cost GM Ran Carthon his job.

2025 OUTLOOK

At the very least, they look like a more talented team after drafting Cam Ward. They'll be better, but they're at least a year away from challenging for a playoff spot. Ward elevates their floor at QB, but what about wide receiver, offensive line and defense? Those need to be better as well.

STATS

Head Coach Brian Callahan

2024 Record 3–14, finished fourth in division, did not qualify for playoffs

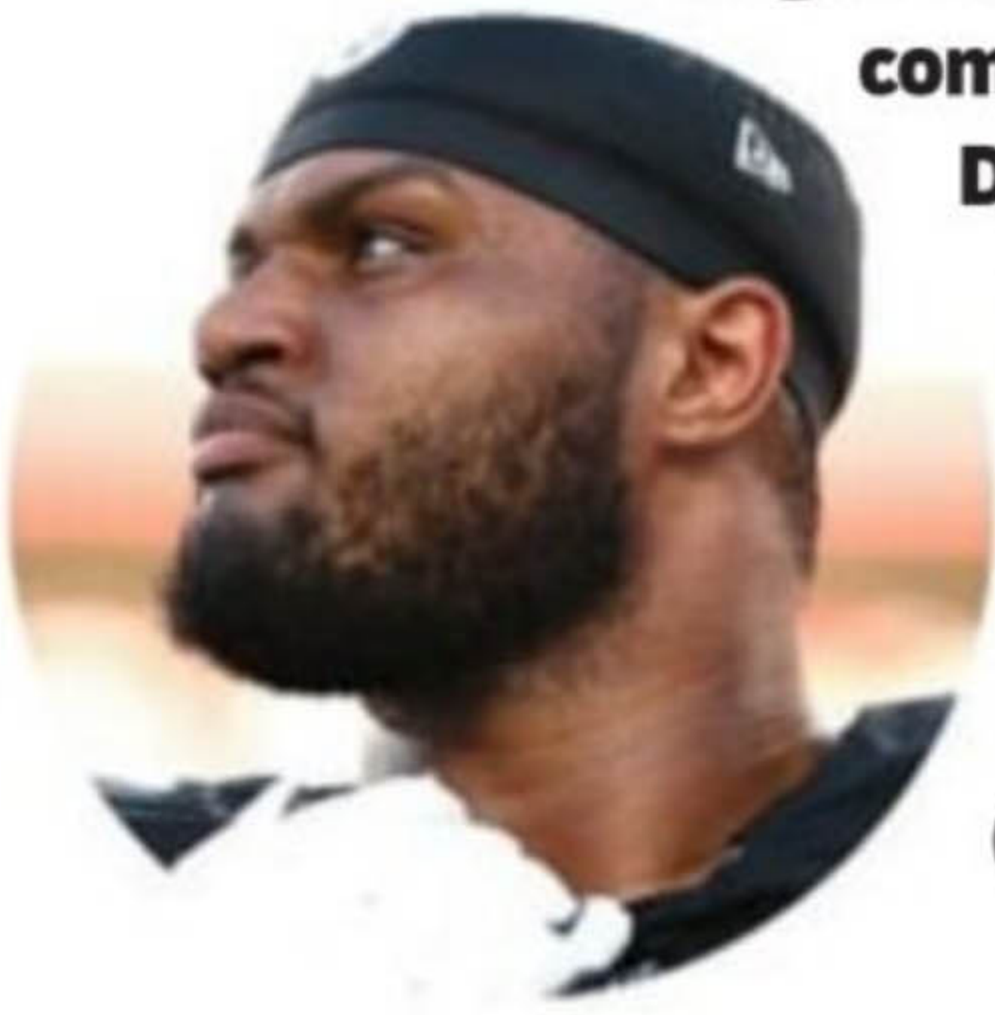
Offensive Leaders Will Levis, 301 attempts, 190 completions, 2,091 yards; Tony Pollard, 260 attempts, 1,079 yards

Defensive Leaders Kenneth Murray Jr., 95 tackles; Amani Hooker, 5 interceptions; Harold Landry III, 9 sacks

> “They were the least talented NFL team, lacking at pretty much every position of note. But now they get a fresh start with Cam Ward.”
>
> Ben Arthur

GAINS

Beyond Cam Ward, whose play will make a big difference, Dan Moore Jr. (below) was acquired from Pittsburgh to take over at left tackle. Veteran guard Kevin Zeitler comes over from Detroit, and the team added veteran WR Tyler Lockett (Seattle) and Van Jefferson (Pittsburgh).



LOSSES

Veteran LB Harold Landry inked a three-year deal with the Patriots, punter Ryan Stonehouse took his powerful leg to Miami and CB Chidobe Awuzie, who dealt with injuries last season, is now with the Ravens. WR Nick Westbrook-Ikhine signed with the Dolphins.

LEFT: KEVIN SABITUS/GETTY IMAGES.
RIGHT: WESLEY HITT/GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

They took **Cam Ward** with the No. 1 pick, and he's their quarterback of the future. “If he's a hit, it changes the trajectory of this franchise, which has been floundering for several years; if he's not, they're in purgatory,” says Fox Sports AFC South reporter Ben Arthur. His success will no doubt be affected by how well the offensive line protects him—a big question mark.

THE PLAYMAKER

Calvin Ridley (right) is their top wideout by far. He gained 1,017 yards receiving last year. Says Arthur, “You need him at a high level to do anything offensively, and his rapport with Cam Ward will be paramount. They are the team's two most explosive talents on offense.”

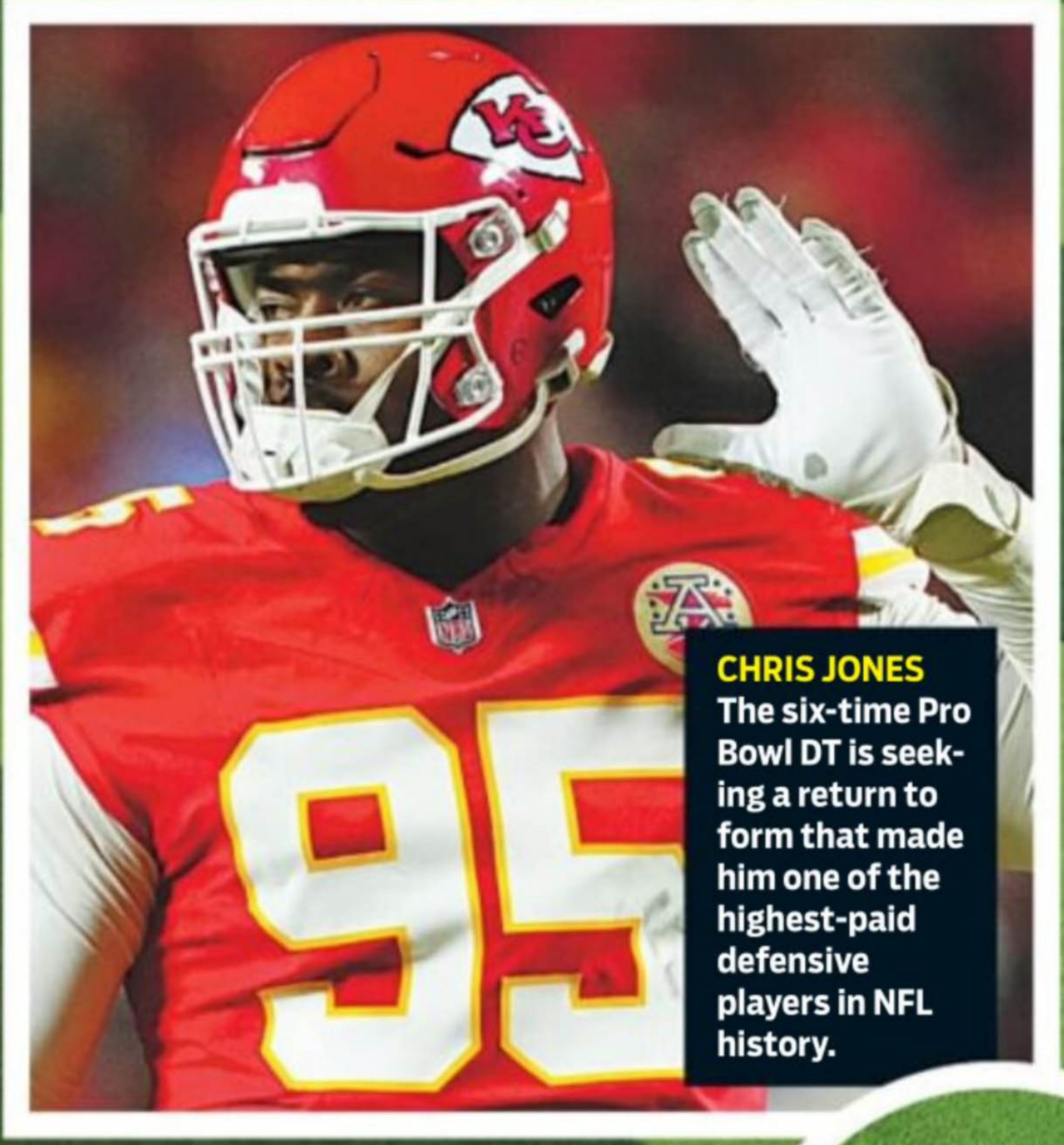
THE DRIVE STOPPER

At his finest, DT **Jeffery Simmons** is a Top 5 defensive tackle, and he had a career-best 76 tackles in 2024. “He's their best player on defense, and he sets the tone for the entire unit,” says Arthur. “If he's playing at a high level, he's extremely disruptive and good things can happen. And the Titans surely need good things to happen.”

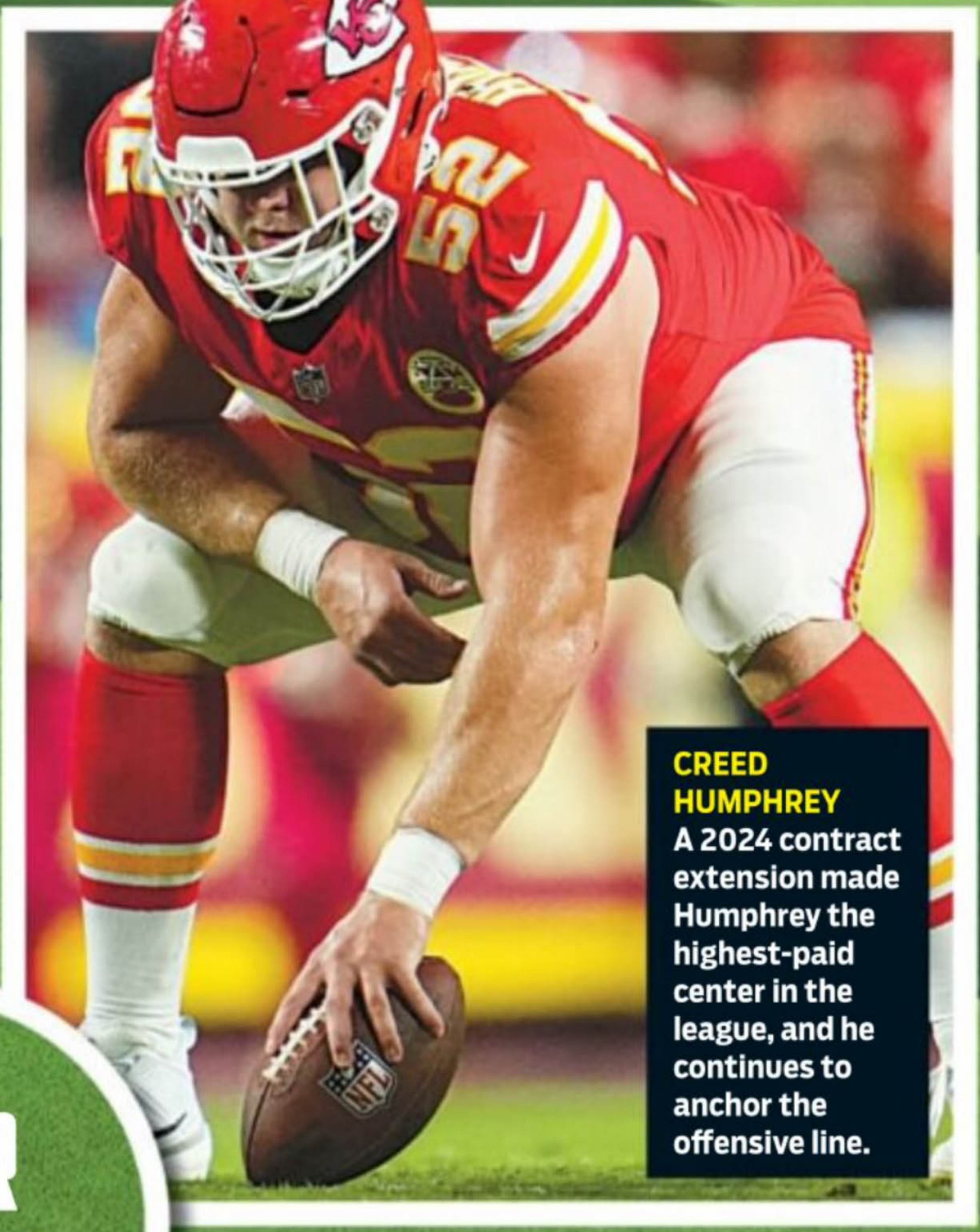
THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

While injuries limited his play in 2024, defensive back **L'Jarius Sneed** is an X factor when he's on the field. At the height of his powers he's one of the most consistent corners in the NFL. If he's healthy, he changes what their defense can be. *—JK*

STAR SHOTS



CHRIS JONES
The six-time Pro Bowl DT is seeking a return to form that made him one of the highest-paid defensive players in NFL history.



CREED HUMPHREY
A 2024 contract extension made Humphrey the highest-paid center in the league, and he continues to anchor the offensive line.

PATRICK MAHOMES
Still the team leader and a dynamically clutch player, the two-time NFL MVP will look for another title.

TRAVIS KELCE
Will this be the final season for the legendary TE and future Hall of Famer? If so, it'll give him more time to hang with girlfriend Taylor Swift.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES (3); JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

AFC WEST

2024 WRAP-UP

The Chiefs rolled through the regular season, took down the Texans in the divisional playoffs and continued their mastery of the Bills in the title game. But their quest for the elusive three-peat came to a screeching halt when the Eagles brought them an epic beatdown in the Big Easy.

2025 OUTLOOK

Andy Reid is still coach, Patrick Mahomes is still QB and KC's title window is still wide open. The team addressed offensive line woes by drafting LT Josh Simmons and signing LT Jaylon Moore, and they have a healthy receiving corps. TE Travis Kelce could be in the last season of his storied career.

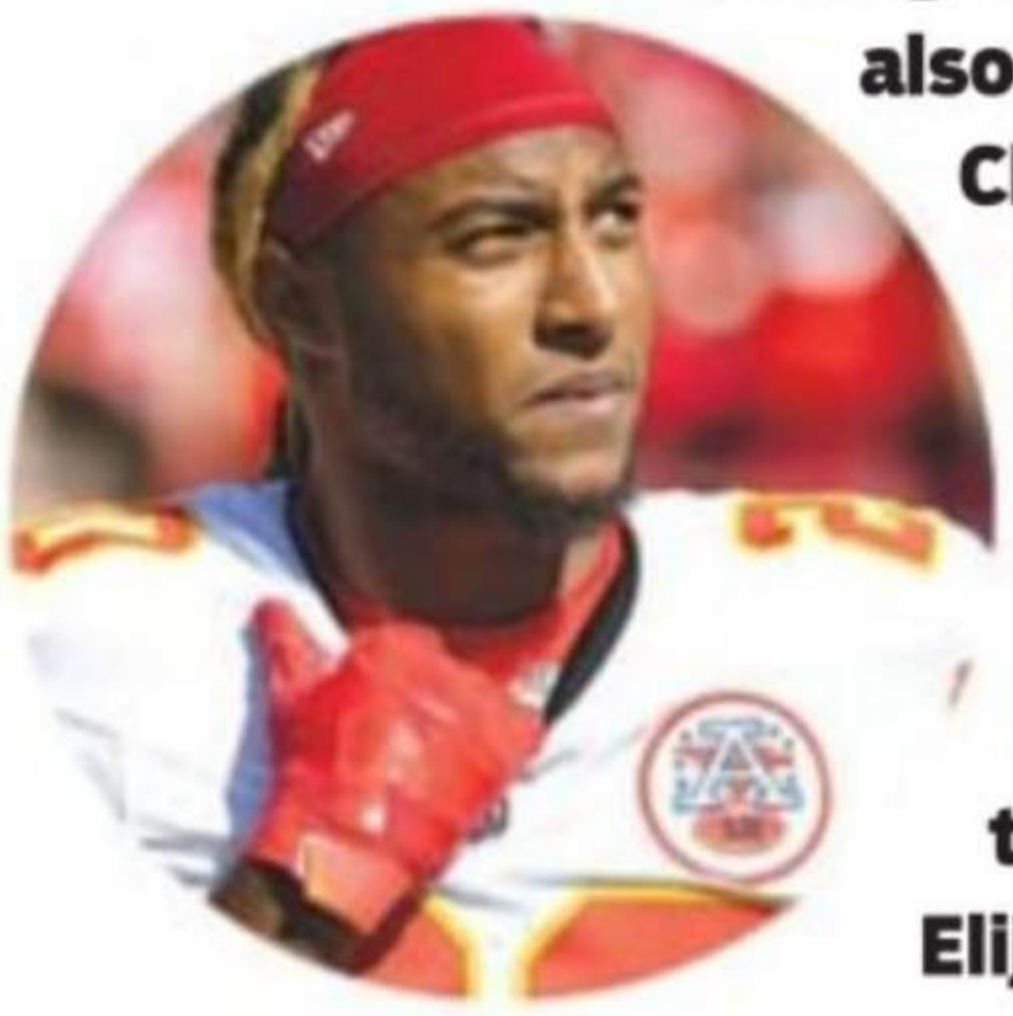
STATS

Head Coach
Andy Reid
2024 Record 15–2, first in AFC West, lost to the Eagles in Super Bowl
Offensive Leaders Patrick Mahomes, 581 attempts, 392 completions, 3,928 yards; Kareem Hunt, 200 attempts, 728 yards
Defensive Leaders Nick Bolton, 106 tackles; Jaden Hicks, 3 interceptions; George Karlaftis, 8 sacks

> “The Chiefs are still the team to beat, but I think things are now a little more evened out in the AFC West Division.”
>
> Chris Myers

GAINS

In addition to Josh Simmons and Jaylon Moore, the Chiefs added backup QB Gardner Minshew, who had success in Philadelphia, Indianapolis and Las Vegas. The team also signed DE Charles Omenihu, DT Jerry Tillery, WR Marquise Brown, CB Kristian Fulton and RB Elijah Mitchell.



LOSSES

Safety Justin Reid (above), who statistically had one of his best seasons with the Chiefs, signed a deal with the Saints. Other departures include RB Samaje Perine (now with the Bengals), DT Derrick Nnadi (Jets), WR Justin Watson (Texans) and Mecole Hardman (Packers).

LEFT: MICHAEL OWENS/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

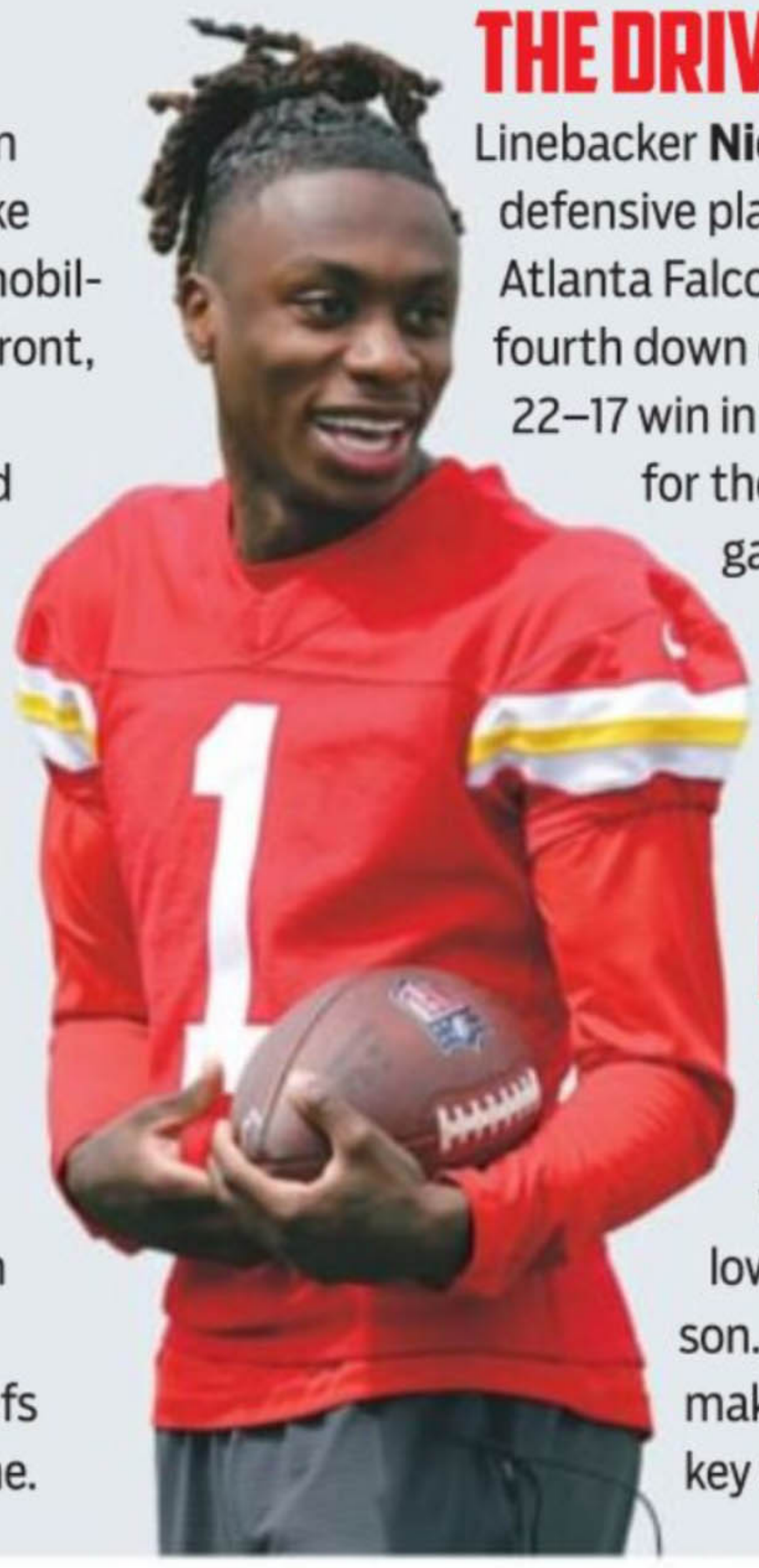
>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

QB **Patrick Mahomes** is still an all-world talent, and he can take over games with his arm and mobility. With better protection up front, he'll be as dangerous as ever. “Mahomes can create time and get away with it for a certain amount of time, but that offensive line has to hold up,” says Fox Sports NFL analyst Chris Myers.

THE PLAYMAKER

Rookie WR **Xavier Worthy** (right) showed flashes of brilliance late last season, and though his two TD receptions in Super Bowl LIX came when the game was out of hand, the Chiefs hope it's a sign of things to come.



THE DRIVE STOPPER

Linebacker **Nick Bolton** had one of the biggest defensive plays of the season when he stuffed Atlanta Falcons RB Bijan Robinson on a crucial fourth down deep in Chiefs territory to seal the 22–17 win in Week 3. It was a mighty good sign for the workhorse, who sat out several games in 2023 after a late-October injury and came back strong in 2024 to lead the team in tackles.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

“I expect him to have a rebound year,” Myers says of DT **Chris Jones**, whose five sacks in 2024 marked his lowest total since his 2016 rookie season. “But he's 31. He's still a difference maker. I think they started to use him in key spots differently.” —*Ryan A. Berenz*

AFC WEST

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS

2024 WRAP-UP

Jim Harbaugh returned to the NFL head coaching ranks and revived a team that went 5–12 the previous season, and QB Justin Herbert bounced back from a 2023 injury. In the postseason, the Bolts were snakebitten once again and remain winless in the playoffs since 2018.

2025 OUTLOOK

The Chargers shocked many last year, but no one is overlooking them now. The team invested in offensive skill position players in the offseason, and with a sturdy defense and a new commitment to the run, Harbaugh's mixing his classic winning formula in L.A.

STATS

Head Coach
Jim Harbaugh

2024 Record 11–6, finished second in AFC West and lost to Texans in the wild-card round

Offensive Leaders Justin Herbert, 504 attempts, 332 completions, 3,870 yards; J.K. Dobbins, 195 attempts, 905 yards

Defensive Leaders Daiyan Henley, 147 tackles; Tarheeb Still, 4 interceptions; Tuli Tuipulotu, 8.5 sacks

> “Maybe they surprised some people. Some people think they might take a step back this year. I don't really see that.”
>
> Chris Myers

GAINS

Drafting RB Omarion Hampton in the first round and WR Tre Harris in the second, and signing a former first-rounder in RB Najee Harris, who shone in Pittsburgh, are pluses. But look for QB Justin Herbert to be happiest about signing guard Mekhi Becton (left).

LOSSES

DT Poona Ford's signing with the Rams was a big loss. Losing Morgan Fox to the Falcons hurt as well. But releasing five-time Pro Bowler Joey Bosa to free up cap space might just turn around and bite them. WR Josh Palmer joined the Bills.

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

“This is the prime of his career, and I think we saw positive steps from him,” Fox Sports analyst Chris Myers says of QB **Justin Herbert**, entering his sixth season. With a power running game controlling the line of scrimmage, Harbaugh's setting Herbert up for better success.

THE PLAYMAKER

WR **Ladd McConkey** racked up the most receiving yards and receptions by a rookie in franchise history, carrying more of the load than was healthy for the offense (and him too). “They've added some other sprinkles on the receiving game, but McConkey was the outstanding rookie, and that contributed to the progressive season for them,” Myers says.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

The defense will miss the veteran leadership of DE Joey Bosa, now with the Buffalo Bills. LB **Khalil Mack** (below) signed a one-year deal to stay with the Chargers, and at 34, can still bring the heat. Says Myers, “I think that he steps up for them as their key defensive leader.”

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

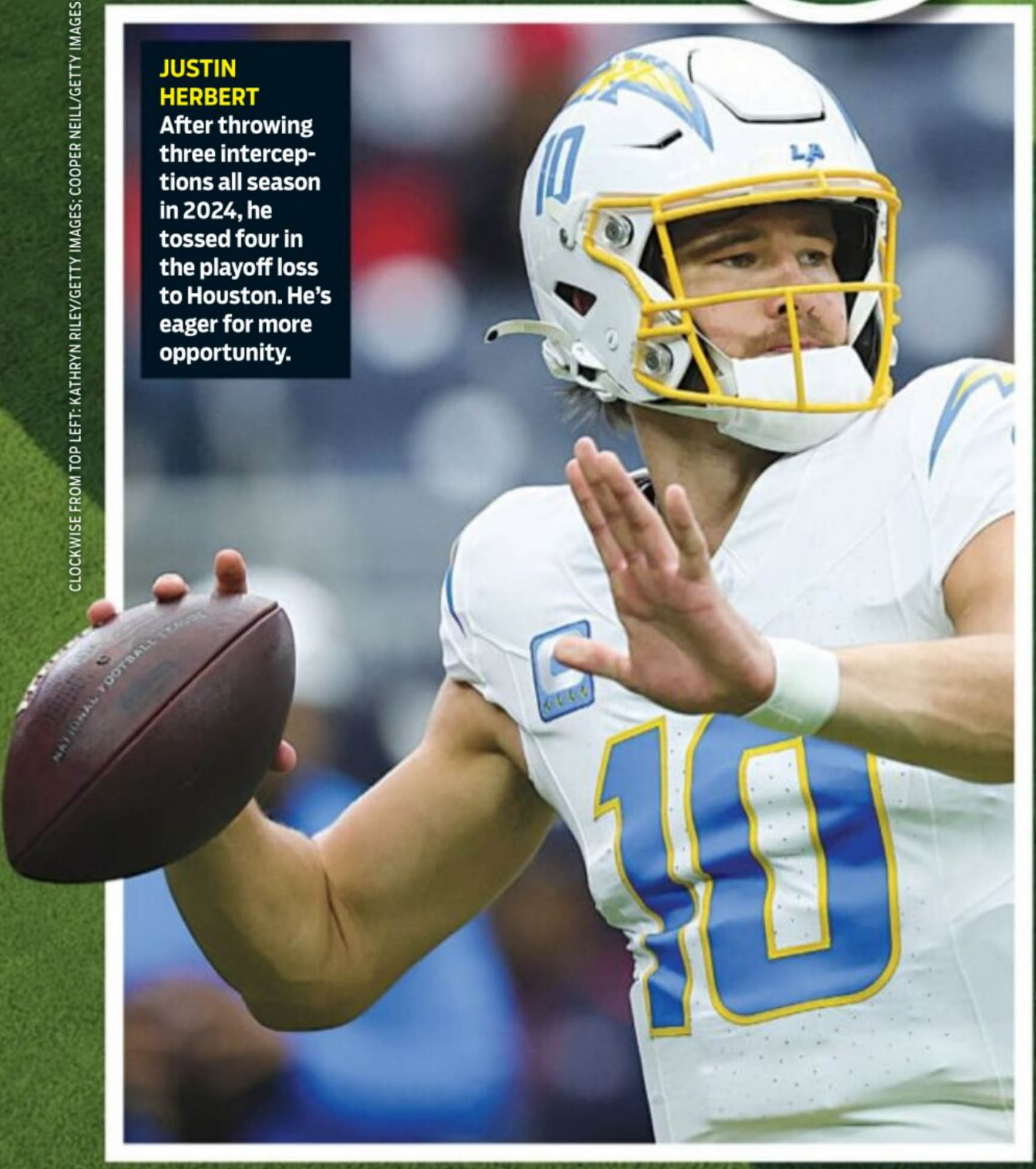
Mekhi Becton had an outstanding year on the Eagles' O-line blocking for RB Saquon Barkley. Now, Harbaugh hopes the RG will do the same to build a punishing ground game for the Bolts. “He's been a terrific run-blocking, mauler type,” Myers says. —*RAB*

LEFT: KEITH BIRMINGHAM/MEDIANEWS GROUP/PASADENA STAR-NEWS VIA GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: RICH VON BIBERSTEIN/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

DERWIN JAMES JR.
The veteran safety posted 5.5 sacks last season, a career best, to go with 93 tackles, earning Pro Bowl honors.

LADD MCCONKEY
His 197 yards set an NFL record for rookie receiving yardage in a playoff game, and he led the Chargers in 2024 with 82 receptions.

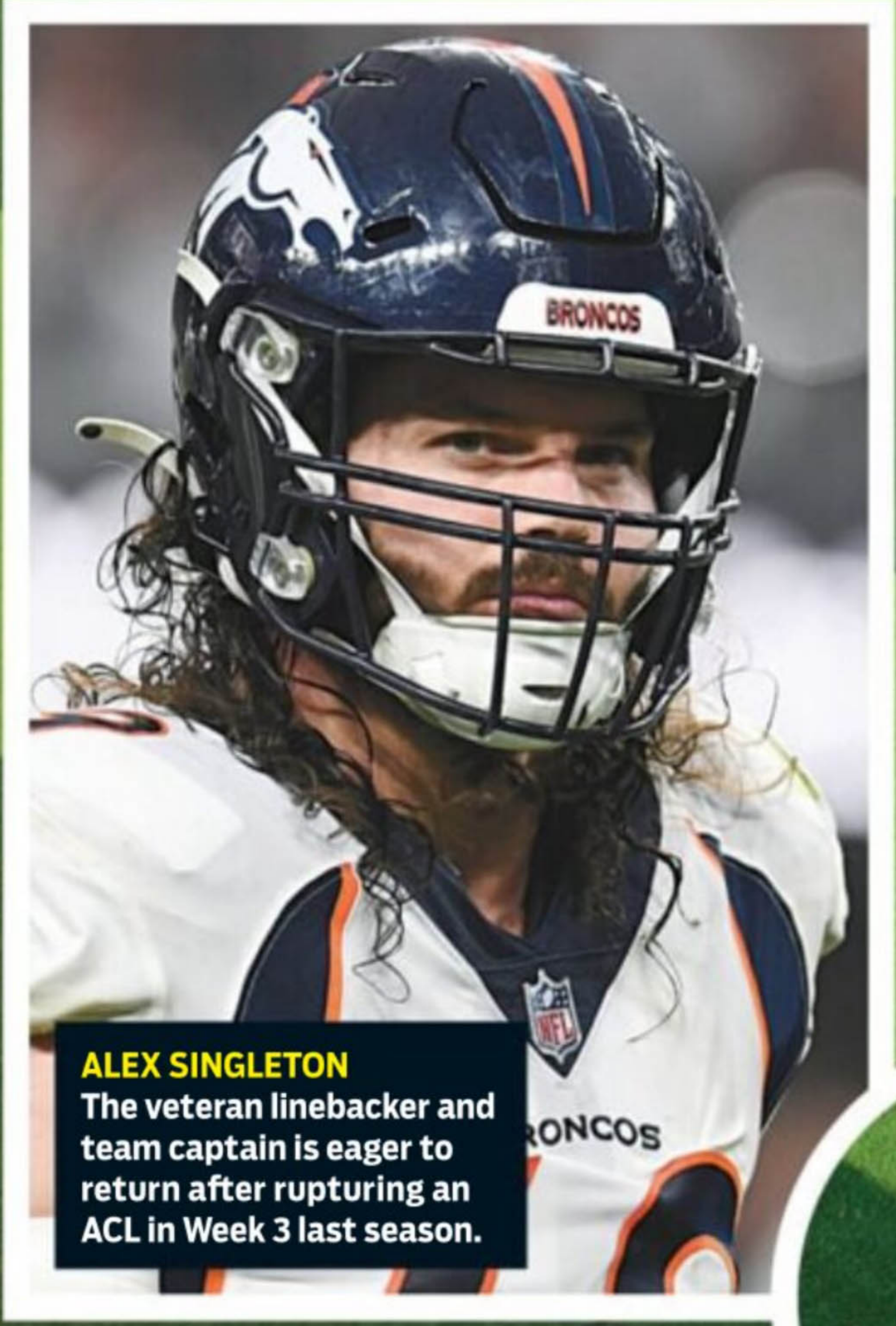


JUSTIN HERBERT
After throwing three interceptions all season in 2024, he tossed four in the playoff loss to Houston. He's eager for more opportunity.

DAIYAN HENLEY
The LB led the team by far with 147 tackles and, in what is now only his third year, will be looked at as a team leader on the defensive side of the ball.

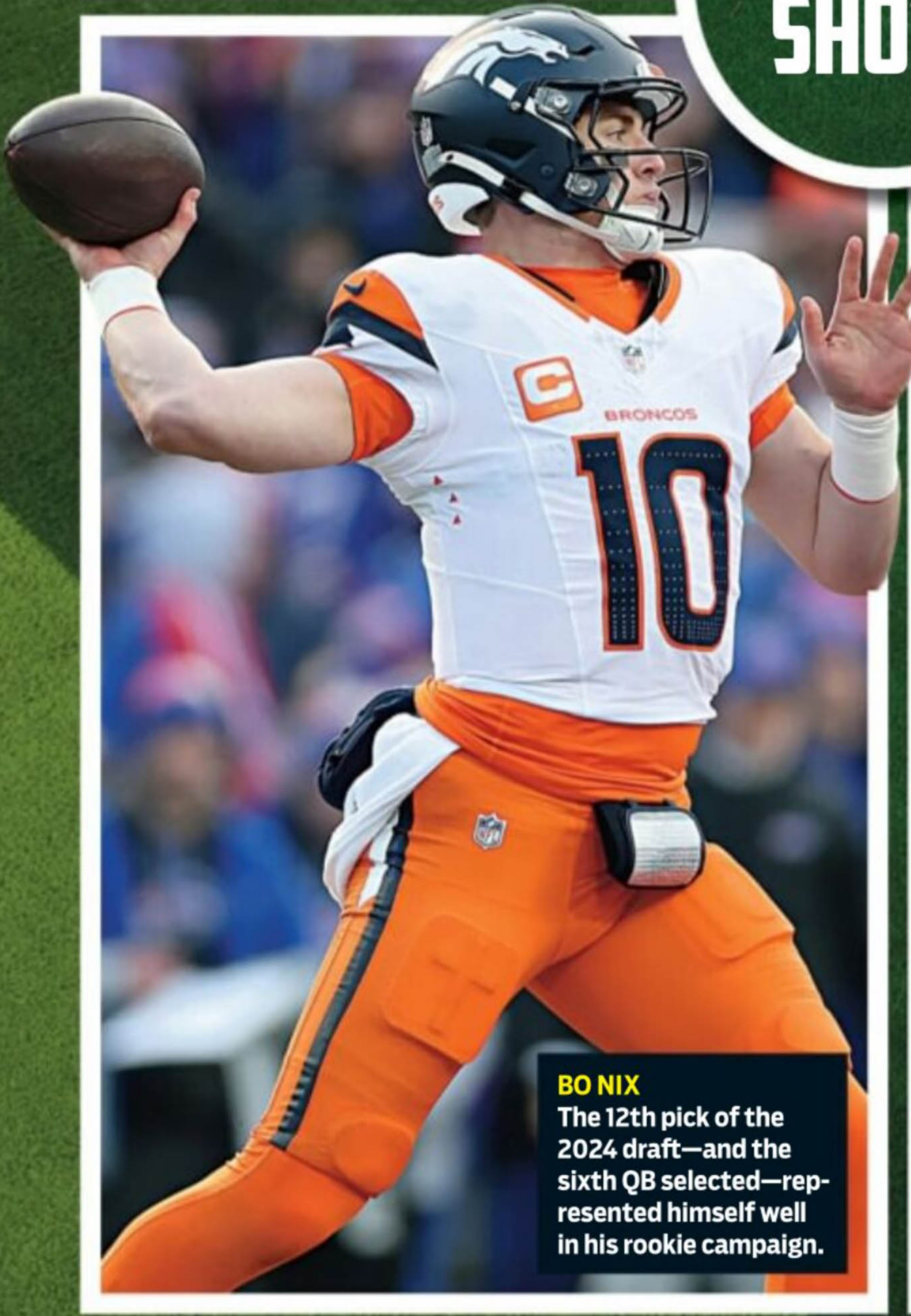
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KATHRYN RILEY/GETTY IMAGES; COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES; MADDIE MEYER/GETTY IMAGES; ALEX SLITZ/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS



ALEX SINGLETON
The veteran linebacker and team captain is eager to return after rupturing an ACL in Week 3 last season.

QUINN MEINERZ
The right guard signed a four-year, $80 million extension last July before the start of his first All-Pro season, keeping him with the team through 2028.



BO NIX
The 12th pick of the 2024 draft—and the sixth QB selected—represented himself well in his rookie campaign.

NIK BONITTO
The stellar 2024 Pro Bowl linebacker added 48 tackles, one interception and two forced fumbles to the totals in his third season in the league.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CANDICE WARD/GETTY IMAGES; COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES; MICHAEL OWENS/GETTY IMAGES; ELSA/GETTY IMAGES

DENVER BRONCOS

AFC WEST

2024 WRAP-UP

Rookie QB Bo Nix had a stellar first year, guiding the Broncos to their first winning season since 2016 and earning the No. 7 seed in the AFC playoffs. The Broncos scored on their first possession, then gave up 31 unanswered points in a rout by Buffalo in the wild-card game—but it's a start.

2025 OUTLOOK

The third season under head coach Sean Payton should see continued growth for Nix. The league's No. 7–ranked defense added quality depth, and a secondary with Defensive Player of the Year Pat Surtain II and first-round pick CB Jahdae Barron will be tough to throw against.

STATS

Head Coach
Sean Payton

2024 Record 10–7, finished third in AFC West, lost to Buffalo in the wild-card round

Offensive Leaders Bo Nix, 567 attempts, 376 completions, 3,775 yards; Javonte Williams, 139 attempts, 513 yards

Defensive Leaders Brandon Jones, 115 tackles; Pat Surtain II, 4 interceptions; Nik Bonitto, 13.5 sacks

> “Here's the breakthrough moment they need: They've got to beat the Chiefs or surpass the Chiefs, and then see where they go.”
>
> Chris Myers

GAINS

The Broncos will benefit from the addition of TE Evan Engram as an underneath target and second-round-draft-pick running back RJ Harvey, who they hope will boost the ground game. Other adds include safety Talanoa Hufanga, LB Dre Greenlaw and WR Trent Sherfield.

LOSSES

RB Javonte Williams (above) had been a key piece of the team's offense and was their leading rusher in 2024, but he signed with the Cowboys in the offseason. Also gone is WR Lil'Jordan Humphrey (signed with the Giants), LB Cody Barton (Titans) and CB/KR Tremon Smith (Texans).

LEFT: COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: KEITH BIRMINGHAM/ MEDIANEWS GROUP/PASADENA STAR-NEWS VIA GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

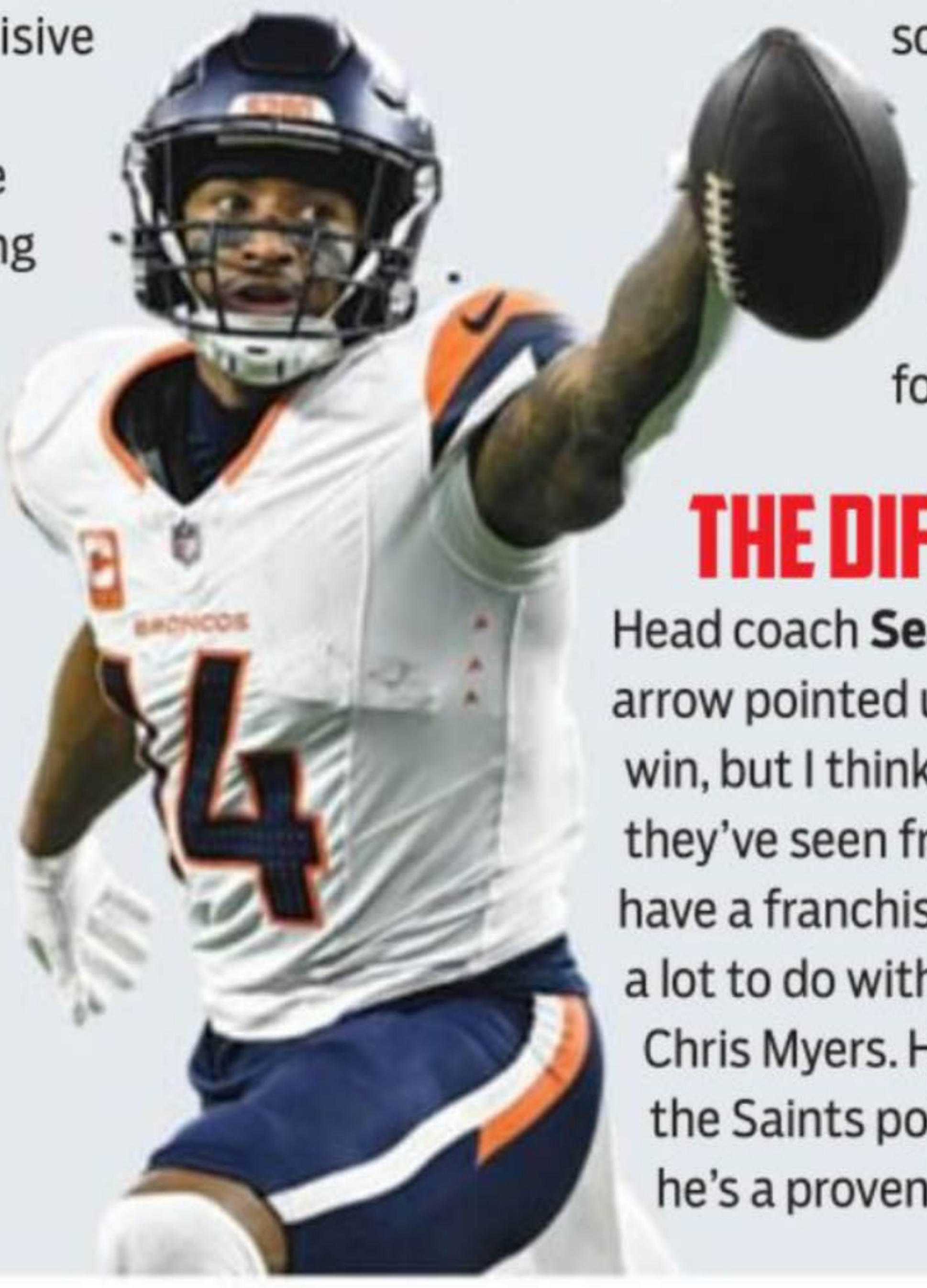
>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

A finalist for Offensive Rookie of the Year, **Bo Nix** appears to be the franchise QB the Broncos have sought since Peyton Manning's retirement. He's a strong, decisive passer, and Sean Payton will make him even better than he was, which is saying something after a season with 29 TDs against 12 interceptions.

THE PLAYMAKER

Courtland Sutton (right) is the team's clear No. 1 receiver and Nix's favorite target. Adding TE Evan Engram and the continued emergence of second-year WR Troy Franklin could help take the focus off of Sutton and open him up for big plays.



THE DRIVE STOPPER

His 13.5 sacks were good enough for third in the NFL last season. But linebacker **Nik Bonitto** not only stops drives, he can also change games. He scored on a 71-yard interception return vs. the Cleveland Browns and had a 50-yard scoop-and-score vs. the Indianapolis Colts the following week.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

Head coach **Sean Payton** has the Broncos' arrow pointed up. “Ownership is in a hurry to win, but I think they're satisfied with what they've seen from Sean Payton, and they have a franchise quarterback that Sean had a lot to do with,” says Fox Sports analyst Chris Myers. His Super Bowl XLIV title with the Saints points to his bona fides and he's a proven winner. *—RAB*

AFC WEST

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS

2024 WRAP-UP

The organization was high on head coach Antonio Pierce and the attitude he brought to the team, but the wheels quickly fell off. After a 2–2 start, the Raiders went on a 10-game losing skid and missed the playoffs for the third-straight year. Pierce was fired at season's end.

2025 OUTLOOK

The Raiders believe they've found their man in head coach Pete Carroll. QB Geno Smith gives them much-needed stability under center. Selecting RB Ashton Jeanty in the first round was a bold move that should improve the league's worst rushing offense. They'll have a fighting chance.

STATS

Head Coach Pete Carroll

2024 Record 4–13, finished fourth in AFC West and did not qualify for playoffs

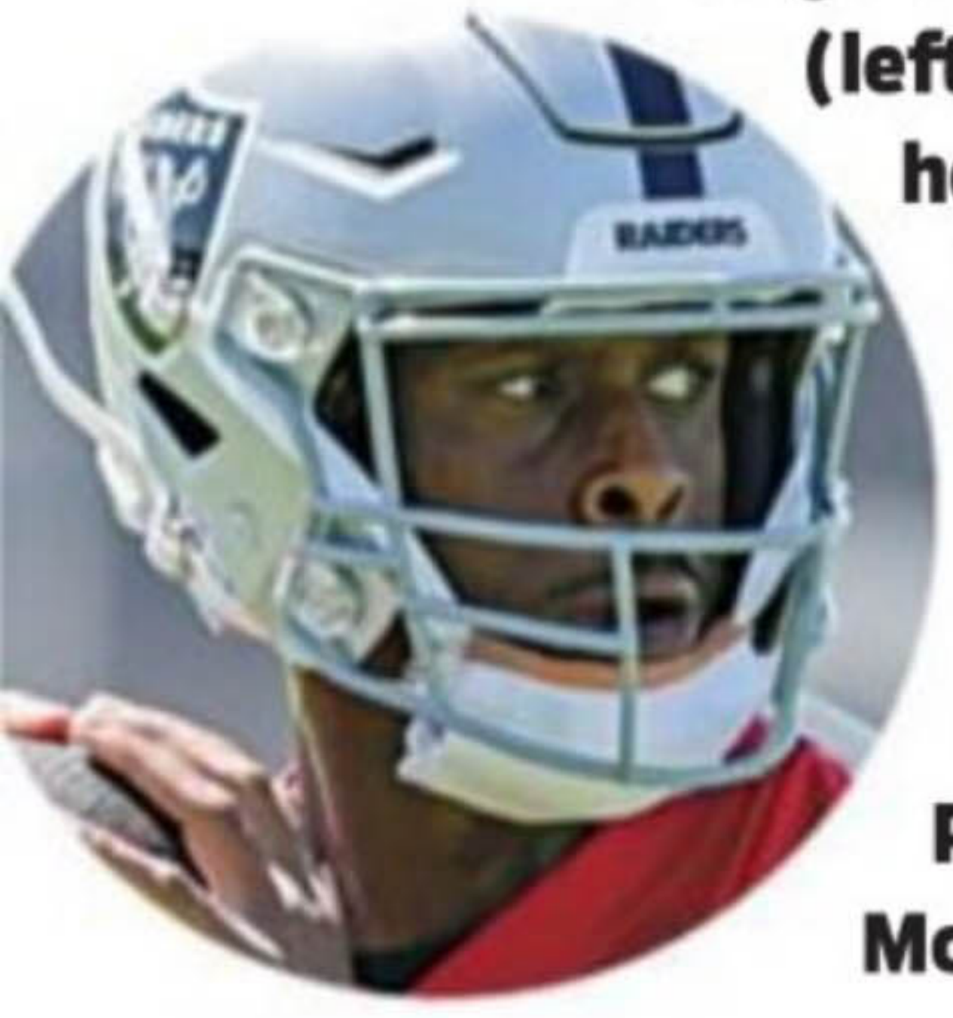
Offensive Leaders Gardner Minshew, 306 attempts, 203 completions, 2,013 yards; Alexander Mattison, 132 attempts, 420 yards

Defensive Leaders Robert Spillane, 158 tackles; Jack Jones, 3 interceptions; Maxx Crosby, 7.5 sacks

> "They've got, to me, two of the best at their position in [DE] Maxx Crosby and [TE] Brock Bowers. Those are anchors on each side of the ball."
>
> Chris Myers

GAINS

In addition to Pete Carroll, the Raiders brought in highly regarded offensive coordinator Chip Kelly, both of whom will have a hand in guiding new QB Geno Smith (left), who should help the team improve significantly. Also aboard: safety Jeremy Chinn and RB Raheem Mostert.



LOSSES

Two key defensive players departed: LB Robert Spillane signed with the Patriots and safety Tre'von Moehrig inked a deal with the Panthers. Also off the roster: last year's top QB Gardner Minshew (signed with the division rival Chiefs) and TE Harrison Bryant (now with the Eagles).

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

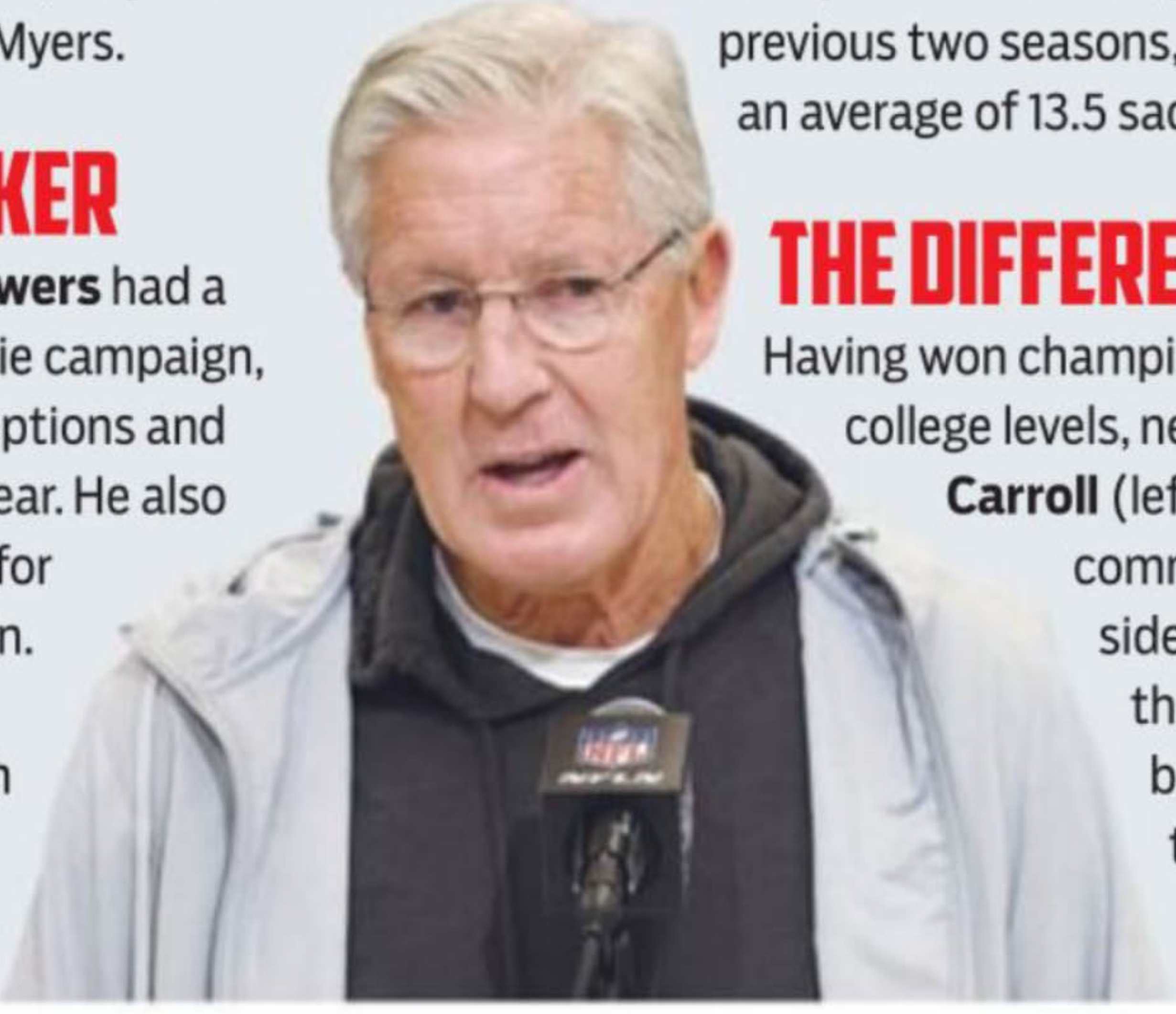
Geno Smith threw for 4,320 yards and 21 TDs with the Seattle Seahawks last season, and he's a tremendous upgrade at QB, even if it's just a temporary stay. "Pete Carroll wouldn't say to GM John Spytek, 'Let's go get him' if he wasn't a guy who could at least deliver for them for a certain amount of time," says Fox Sports analyst Chris Myers.

THE PLAYMAKER

Pro Bowler **Brock Bowers** had a record-breaking rookie campaign, leading all TEs in receptions and receiving yards last year. He also set a franchise mark for receptions in a season. With Smith at QB, expectations are high for an even better sophomore outing.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

With a surgically repaired ankle and a three-year, $106.5 million contract extension, DE **Maxx Crosby** is ready to wreak more havoc on opposing offenses. Despite only playing 12 games in 2024, he recorded 17 tackles for a loss, which was tied for sixth in the NFL. How good is he when he's healthy? He led the league in tackles for loss the previous two seasons, where he also recorded an average of 13.5 sacks per season.



THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

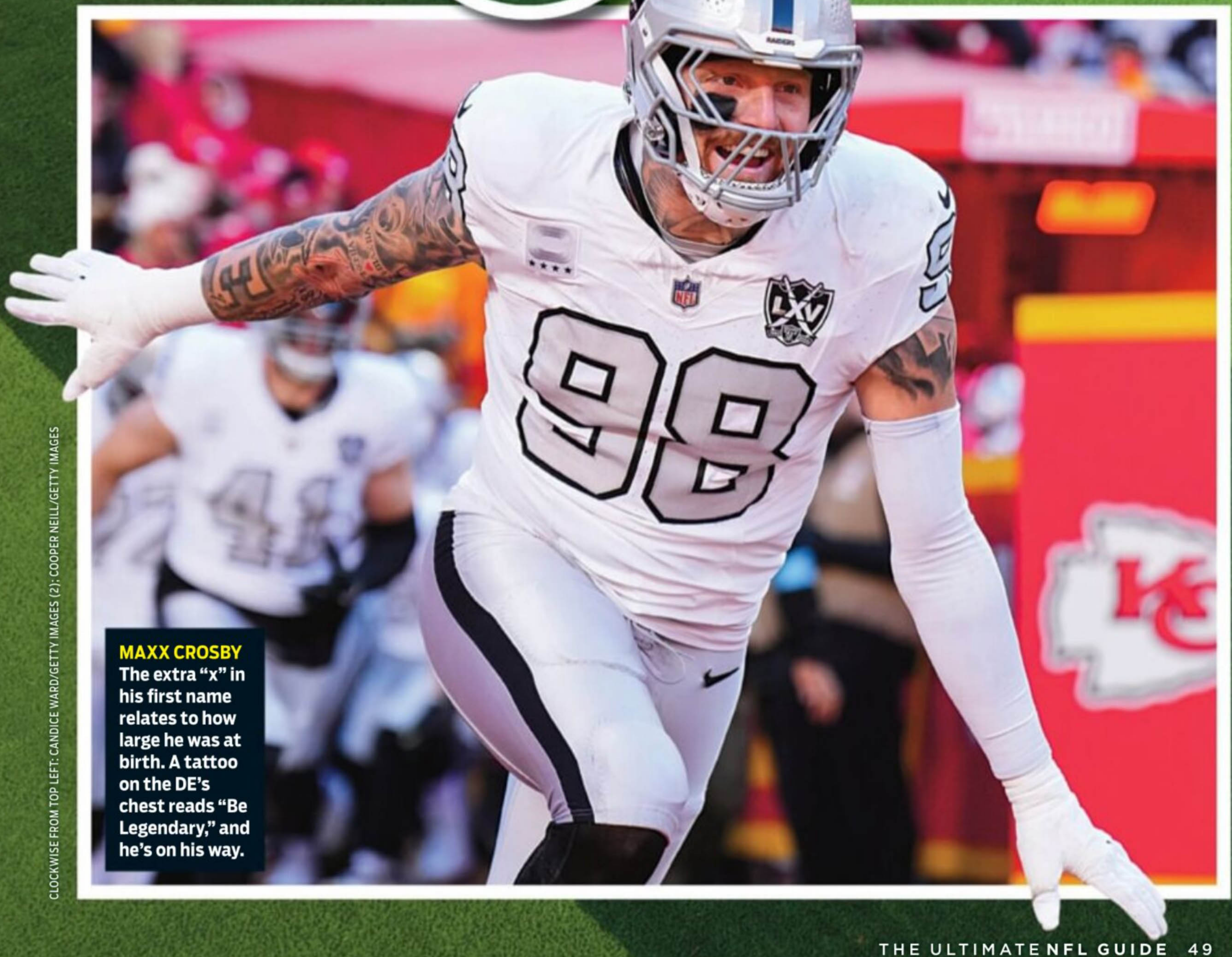
Having won championships at the NFL and college levels, new head coach **Pete Carroll** (left) gives Las Vegas a commanding presence on the sideline. "The Raiders needed that," Myers says. "It has been a long time since they've gotten the respect around the league." —*RAS*

LEFT: ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: STACY REVERE/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

JAKOBI MEYERS
The wideout keeps improving every year and put up career-best numbers in 2024 with 87 receptions for 1,027 yards; having Smith now will help.

BROCK BOWERS
The team reception leader last season caught 112 passes for 1,194 yards and added five TDs. The 13th pick of the 2024 draft made the All-Rookie team.

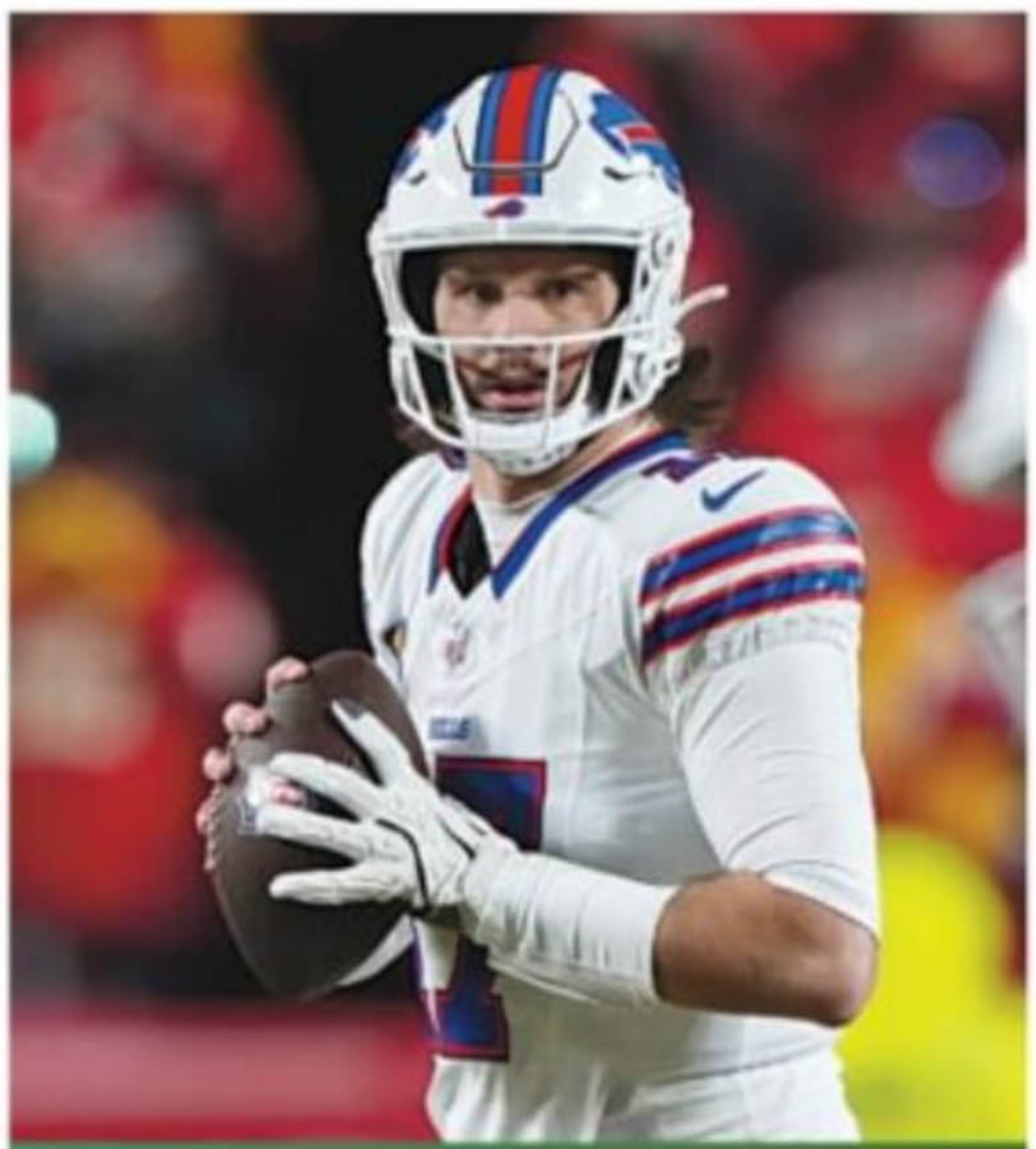


MAXX CROSBY
The extra "x" in his first name relates to how large he was at birth. A tattoo on the DE's chest reads "Be Legendary," and he's on his way.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CANDICE WARD/GETTY IMAGES (2); COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES

HOW TO WATCH EVERY

Here's your complete game-by-game look at where and how to watch—including the 20 can't-miss contests of the 2025 NFL season



Week 1 Spotlight

BALTIMORE RAVENS AT BUFFALO BILLS

NBC's *Sunday Night Football* season starts with a rematch of last year's down-to-the-wire AFC divisional match, which took Josh Allen (above) and the Bills to the championship game and sent the Ravens packing.

Week 2 Spotlight

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES AT KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

Super Bowl LIX wasn't long ago. Game MVP Jalen Hurts (above) and the Eagles remember it well. Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes? He's had this rematch circled since the schedule was announced.

WEEK 1

Thursday, Sept. 4

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Dallas Cowboys at Philadelphia Eagles

Friday, Sept. 5

8 p.m. on YouTube

Kansas City Chiefs at Los Angeles Chargers *(Sao Paulo)*

Sunday, Sept. 7

1 p.m. on CBS

Las Vegas Raiders at New England Patriots
Pittsburgh Steelers at New York Jets
Miami Dolphins at Indianapolis Colts

1 p.m. on Fox

Arizona Cardinals at New Orleans Saints
New York Giants at Washington Commanders
Carolina Panthers at Jacksonville Jaguars
Cincinnati Bengals at Cleveland Browns
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Atlanta Falcons

4:05 p.m. on Fox

Tennessee Titans at Denver Broncos
San Francisco 49ers at Seattle Seahawks

4:25 p.m. on CBS

Detroit Lions at Green Bay Packers
Houston Texans at Los Angeles Rams

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Baltimore Ravens at Buffalo Bills

Monday, Sept. 8

8:15 p.m. on ABC

Minnesota Vikings at Chicago Bears

WEEK 2

Thursday, Sept. 11

8:15 p.m. on Prime Video

Washington Commanders at Green Bay Packers

Sunday, Sept. 14

1 p.m. on CBS

Jacksonville Jaguars at Cincinnati Bengals
Buffalo Bills at New York Jets
New England Patriots at Miami Dolphins
Los Angeles Rams at Tennessee Titans
Cleveland Browns at Baltimore Ravens

1 p.m. on Fox

San Francisco 49ers at New Orleans Saints
New York Giants at Dallas Cowboys
Seattle Seahawks at Pittsburgh Steelers
Chicago Bears at Detroit Lions

4:05 p.m. on CBS

Denver Broncos at Indianapolis Colts
Carolina Panthers at Arizona Cardinals

4:25 p.m. on Fox

Philadelphia Eagles at Kansas City Chiefs

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Atlanta Falcons at Minnesota Vikings

Monday, Sept. 15

7 p.m. on ESPN/ABC

Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Houston Texans

10 p.m. on ESPN

Los Angeles Chargers at Las Vegas Raiders

GAME THIS SEASON

ALL TIMES ARE EASTERN

WEEK 3

Thursday, Sept. 18

8:15 p.m. on Prime Video

Miami Dolphins at Buffalo Bills

Sunday, Sept. 21

1 p.m. on CBS

Pittsburgh Steelers at New England Patriots

Houston Texans at Jacksonville Jaguars

Indianapolis Colts at Tennessee Titans

Cincinnati Bengals at Minnesota Vikings

1 p.m. on Fox

New York Jets at Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Green Bay Packers at Cleveland Browns

Las Vegas Raiders at Washington Commanders

Atlanta Falcons at Carolina Panthers

Los Angeles Rams at Philadelphia Eagles

4:05 p.m. on CBS

New Orleans Saints at Seattle Seahawks

Denver Broncos at Los Angeles Chargers

4:25 p.m. on Fox

Dallas Cowboys at Chicago Bears

Arizona Cardinals at San Francisco 49ers

8:15 p.m. on NBC

Kansas City Chiefs at New York Giants

Monday, Sept. 22

8:15 p.m. on ESPN/ABC

Detroit Lions at Baltimore Ravens

WEEK 4

Thursday, Sept. 25

8:15 p.m. on Prime Video

Seattle Seahawks at Arizona Cardinals

Sunday, Sept. 28

9:30 a.m. on NFL Network

Minnesota Vikings at Pittsburgh Steelers *(Dublin)*

1 p.m. on CBS

New Orleans Saints at Buffalo Bills

Washington Commanders at Atlanta Falcons

Los Angeles Chargers at New York Giants

Tennessee Titans at Houston Texans

1 p.m. on Fox

Cleveland Browns at Detroit Lions

Carolina Panthers at New England Patriots

Philadelphia Eagles at Tampa Bay Buccaneers

4:05 p.m. on Fox

Jacksonville Jaguars at San Francisco 49ers

Indianapolis Colts at Los Angeles Rams

4:25 p.m. on CBS

Baltimore Ravens at Kansas City Chiefs

Chicago Bears at Las Vegas Raiders

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Green Bay Packers at Dallas Cowboys

Monday, Sept. 29

7:15 p.m., on ESPN

New York Jets at Miami Dolphins

8:15 p.m. on ABC

Cincinnati Bengals at Denver Broncos

WEEK 5

Thursday, Oct. 2

8:15 p.m. on Prime Video

San Francisco 49ers at Los Angeles Rams

ALL TIMES ARE EASTERN

Week 4 Spotlight

MINNESOTA VIKINGS AT PITTSBURGH STEELERS

It's 3,428 miles from Pittsburgh's Acrisure Stadium to this game in Dublin's Croke Park, but Steelers coach Mike Tomlin (above) and new QB Aaron Rodgers will try to make it feel like home.

Week 5 Spotlight

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS AT LOS ANGELES RAMS

A *Thursday Night Football* game on Prime Video, with Brock Purdy (above) and perhaps a much healthier 49ers team, renews this ugly NFC West rivalry against the formidable Rams.

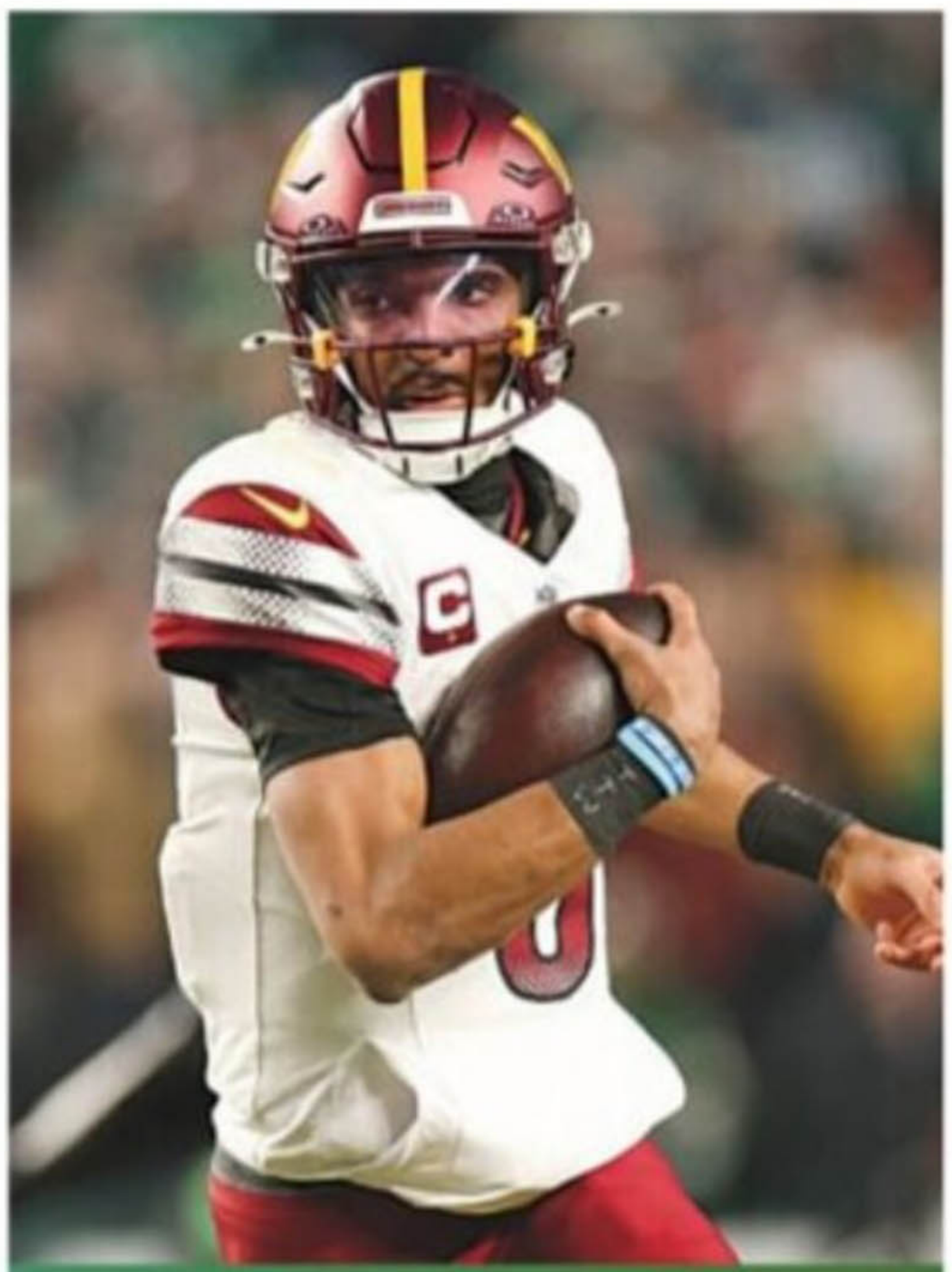
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TODD ROSENBERG/GETTY IMAGES; JUSTIN K. ALLER/GETTY IMAGES; EZRA SHAW/GETTY IMAGES; LOGAN BOWLES/GETTY IMAGES.

HOW TO WATCH EVERY GAME THIS SEASON

Week 5 Spotlight

MINNESOTA VIKINGS AT CLEVELAND BROWNS

The Browns under head coach Kevin Stefanski (above) were 3–14 last season. By this game, played in London, who will their QB be? Deshaun Watson, Shedeur Sanders? Joe Flacco? Anybody?!



Week 6 Spotlight

CHICAGO BEARS AT WASHINGTON COMMANDERS

One year ago, the Bears' season was utterly upended by Commanders QB Jayden Daniels' (above) Hail Mary touchdown pass. They'll want some payback in this Monday night game.

WEEK 5 (cont.)

Sunday, Oct. 5

9:30 a.m. on NFL Network

Minnesota Vikings at Cleveland Browns *(Tottenham)*

1 p.m. on CBS

New York Giants at New Orleans Saints

Denver Broncos at Philadelphia Eagles

Houston Texans at Baltimore Ravens

1 p.m. on Fox

Dallas Cowboys at New York Jets

Las Vegas Raiders at Indianapolis Colts

Miami Dolphins at Carolina Panthers

4:05 p.m. on CBS

Tennessee Titans at Arizona Cardinals

Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Seattle Seahawks

4:25 p.m. on Fox

Washington Commanders at Los Angeles Chargers,

Detroit Lions at Cincinnati Bengals

8:20 p.m. on NBC

New England Patriots at Buffalo Bills

Monday, Oct. 6

8:15 p.m. on ESPN/ABC

Kansas City Chiefs at Jacksonville Jaguars

Bye week:

Atlanta Falcons, Chicago Bears, Green Bay Packers, Pittsburgh Steelers

WEEK 6

Thursday, Oct. 9

8:15 p.m. on Prime Video

Philadelphia Eagles at New York Giants

Sunday, Oct. 12

9:30 a.m. on NFL Network

Denver Broncos at New York Jets

(Tottenham, London)

1 p.m. on CBS

Cleveland Browns at Pittsburgh Steelers

Los Angeles Chargers at Miami Dolphins

San Francisco 49ers at Tampa Bay Buccaneers

1 p.m. on Fox

Seattle Seahawks at Jacksonville Jaguars

Dallas Cowboys at Carolina Panthers

Los Angeles Rams at Baltimore Ravens

Arizona Cardinals at Indianapolis Colts

4:05 p.m. on Fox

Tennessee Titans at Las Vegas Raiders

4:25 p.m. on CBS

Cincinnati Bengals at Green Bay Packers

New England Patriots at New Orleans Saints

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Detroit Lions at Kansas City Chiefs

Week 7 Spotlight

LOS ANGELES RAMS AT JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

In this game played in London, the Rams and QB Matthew Stafford (above) will be testing the Jaguars' top pick, Travis Hunter. Will the CB/WR shine, or will the Rams triumph?

Monday, Oct. 13

7:15 p.m. on ESPN

Chicago Bears at Washington Commanders

8:15 p.m. on ABC

Buffalo Bills at Atlanta Falcons

Bye week:

Houston Texans, Minnesota Vikings

WEEK 7

Thursday, Oct. 16

8:15 p.m. on Prime Video

Pittsburgh Steelers at Cincinnati Bengals

Sunday, Oct. 19

9:30 a.m. on NFL Network

Los Angeles Rams at Jacksonville Jaguars *(Wembley, London)*

1 p.m. on CBS

New England Patriots at Tennessee Titans

Miami Dolphins at Cleveland Browns

Las Vegas Raiders at Kansas City Chiefs

1 p.m. on Fox

Carolina Panthers at New York Jets

New Orleans Saints at Chicago Bears

Philadelphia Eagles at Minnesota Vikings

4:05 p.m. on CBS

New York Giants at Denver Broncos

Indianapolis Colts at Los Angeles Chargers

4:25 p.m. on Fox

Washington Commanders at Dallas Cowboys

Green Bay Packers at Arizona Cardinals

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Atlanta Falcons at San Francisco 49ers

Monday, Oct. 20

7 p.m. on ESPN/ABC

Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Detroit Lions

10 p.m. on ESPN+

Houston Texans at Seattle Seahawks

Bye week:

Baltimore Ravens, Buffalo Bills

WEEK 8

Thursday, Oct. 23

8:15 p.m. on Prime Video

Minnesota Vikings at Los Angeles Chargers

Sunday, Oct. 26

1 p.m. on CBS

New York Jets at Cincinnati Bengals

Chicago Bears at Baltimore Ravens

Miami Dolphins at Atlanta Falcons

1 p.m. on Fox

Cleveland Browns at New England Patriots

New York Giants at Philadelphia Eagles

Buffalo Bills at Carolina Panthers

San Francisco 49ers at Houston Texans

4:05 p.m. on Fox

Tampa Bay Buccaneers at New Orleans Saints

4:25 p.m. on CBS

Dallas Cowboys at Denver Broncos

Tennessee Titans at Indianapolis Colts

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Green Bay Packers at Pittsburgh Steelers

Monday, Oct. 27

8:15 p.m. on ESPN/ABC

Washington Commanders at Kansas City Chiefs

Bye week:

Arizona Cardinals, Detroit Lions, Jacksonville Jaguars, Los Angeles Rams, Las Vegas Raiders, Seattle Seahawks

WEEK 9

Thursday, Oct. 30

8:15 p.m. on Prime Video

Baltimore Ravens at Miami Dolphins

Sunday, Nov. 2

1 p.m. on CBS

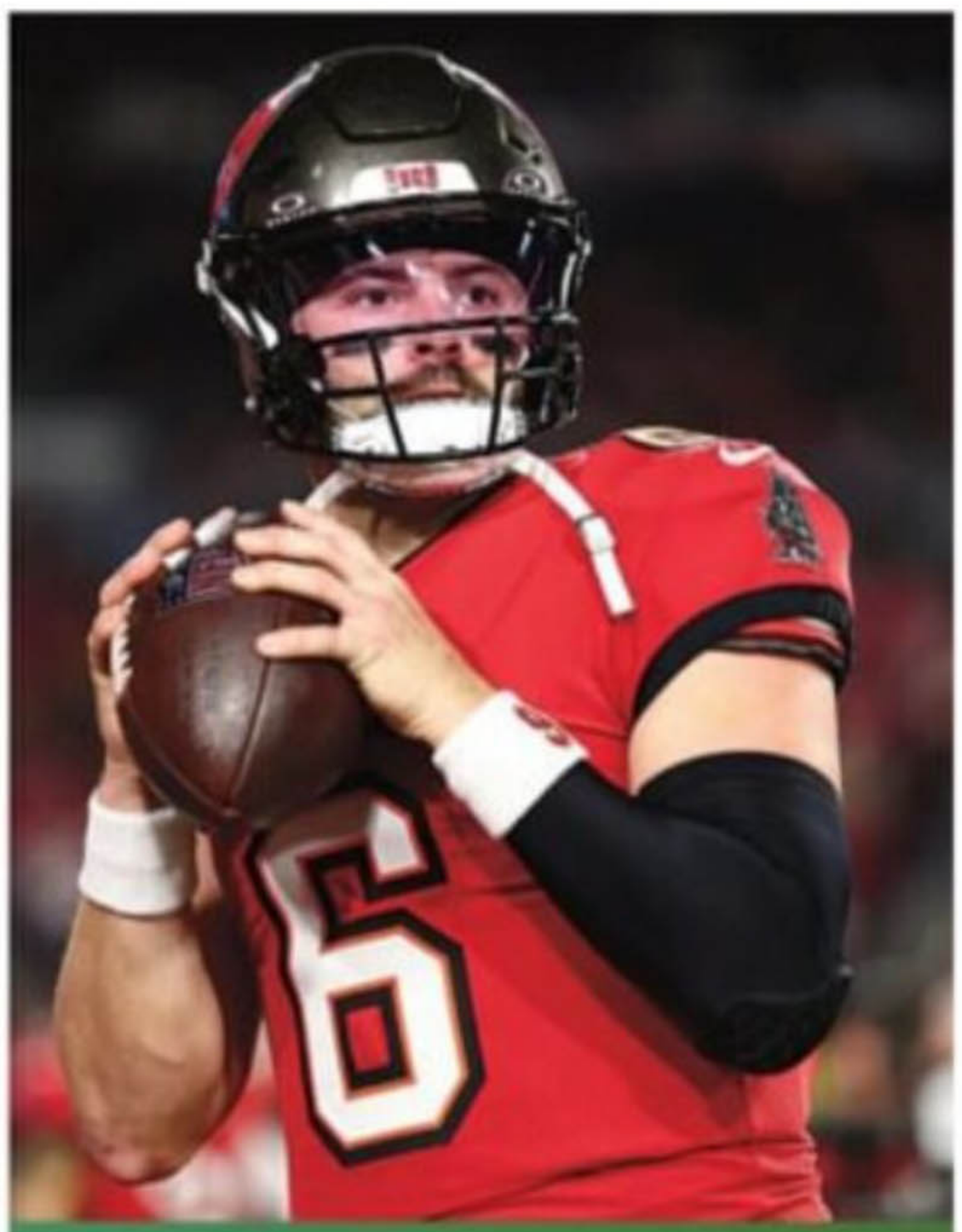
Indianapolis Colts at Pittsburgh Steelers

ALL TIMES ARE EASTERN

Week 7 Spotlight

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS AT DALLAS COWBOYS

Can we assume that these bitter NFC East rivals will be relatively healthy? Will incomparable DE Micah Parsons (above) be in the Cowboys lineup? If so, expect a close one here.



Week 7 Spotlight

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS AT DETROIT LIONS

Call this a "potential playoff preview" alert. The Lions owned the No. 1 seed last season but didn't make it to the Super Bowl. The Bucs, behind QB Baker Mayfield (above), won the NFC South last year and will be a wily competitor.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NICK CAMMETT/GETTY IMAGES; ANDY LEWIS/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES;
KEVIN SABITUS/GETTY IMAGES; KARA DURRETTE/GETTY IMAGES; KATHRYN RILEY/GETTY IMAGES

HOW TO WATCH EVERY GAME THIS SEASON

Week 9 Spotlight
KANSAS CITY CHIEFS AT BUFFALO BILLS

Since 2021, the Bills have won all the in-season matchups and the Chiefs, led by QB Patrick Mahomes (above), have won the playoff matchups. These are always close, heated games.

Week 9 Spotlight
DENVER BRONCOS AT HOUSTON TEXANS

The competition between teams led by young quarterbacks—Broncos' Bo Nix and Texans' C.J. Stroud (above)—will be as fierce as the one between the talented coaches: Sean Payton (Broncos) and DeMeco Ryans (Texans).

WEEK 9 (cont.)

Atlanta Falcons at New England Patriots
Chicago Bears at Cincinnati Bengals
Los Angeles Chargers at Tennessee Titans
San Francisco 49ers at New York Giants
1 p.m. on Fox
Carolina Panthers at Green Bay Packers
Denver Broncos at Houston Texans
Minnesota Vikings at Detroit Lions
4:05 p.m. on Fox
Jacksonville Jaguars at Las Vegas Raiders
New Orleans Saints at Los Angeles Rams
4:25 p.m. on CBS
Kansas City Chiefs at Buffalo Bills
8:20 p.m. on NBC
Seattle Seahawks at Washington Commanders

Monday, Nov. 3

8:15 p.m. on ESPN/ABC
Arizona Cardinals at Dallas Cowboys
Bye week:
Cleveland Browns, New York Jets, Philadelphia Eagles, Tampa Bay Buccaneers

WEEK 10

Thursday, Nov. 6

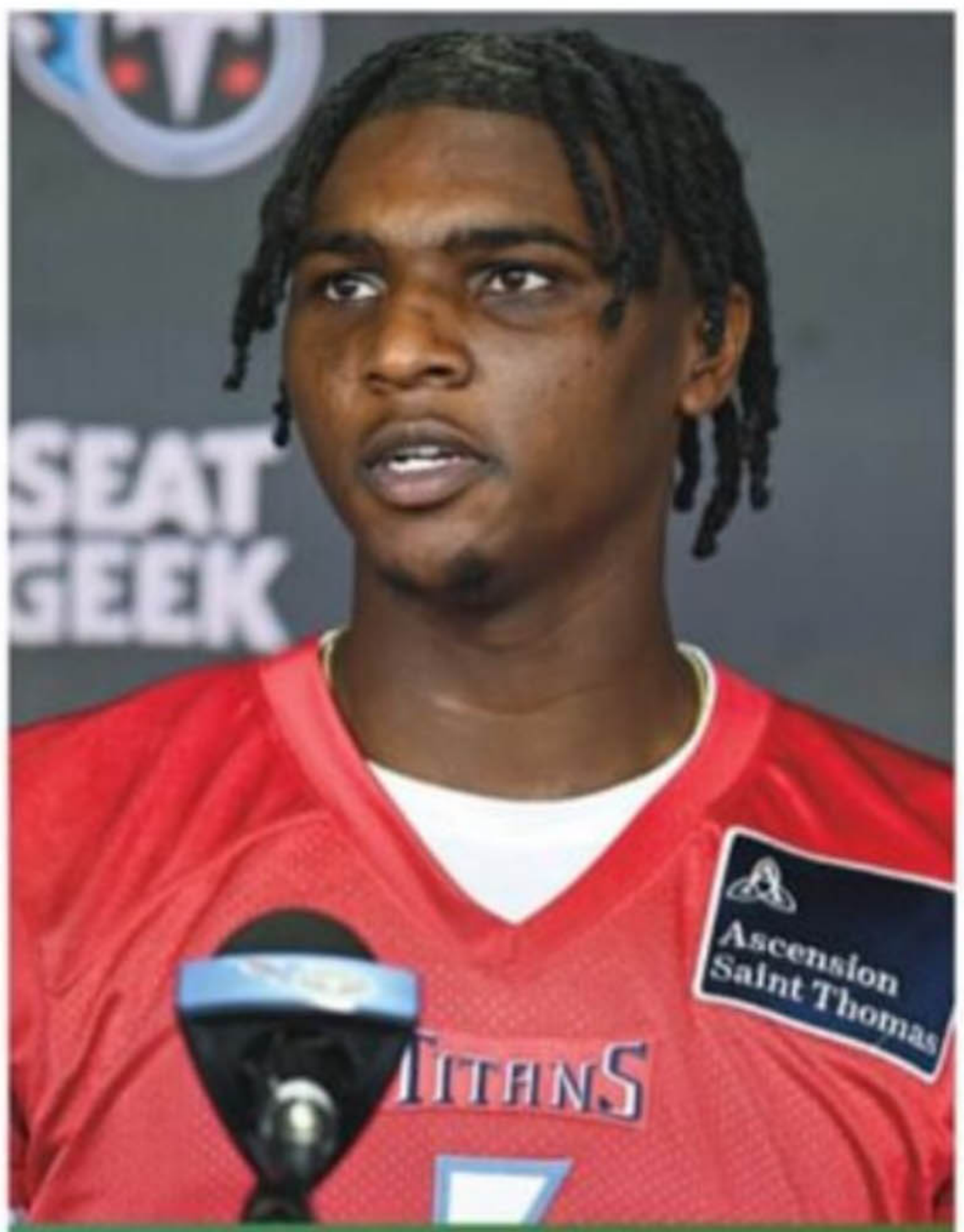
8:15 p.m. on Prime Video
Las Vegas Raiders at Denver Broncos

Sunday, Nov. 9

9:30 a.m. on NFL Network
Atlanta Falcons at Indianapolis Colts
(Berlin)
1 p.m. on CBS
Jacksonville Jaguars at Houston Texans
Buffalo Bills at Miami Dolphins
New England Patriots at Tampa Bay Buccaneers
Cleveland Browns at New York Jets
1 p.m. on Fox
New York Giants at Chicago Bears
New Orleans Saints at Carolina Panthers
Baltimore Ravens at Minnesota Vikings
4:05 p.m. on CBS
Arizona Cardinals at Seattle Seahawks
4:25 p.m. on Fox
Los Angeles Rams at San Francisco 49ers
Detroit Lions at Washington Commanders
8:20 p.m. on NBC
Pittsburgh Steelers at Los Angeles Chargers

Monday, Nov. 10

8:15 p.m. on ABC
Philadelphia Eagles at Green Bay Packers
Bye week:
Cincinnati Bengals, Dallas Cowboys, Kansas City Chiefs, Tennessee Titans



Week 9 Spotlight
LOS ANGELES CHARGERS AT TENNESSEE TITANS

First seasons for quarterbacks chosen No. 1 overall in the draft are often tough. Has the team done enough to beef up the O-line to protect the passer? We'll see top pick Cam Ward (above) of the Titans in this AFC matchup.

WEEK 11

Thursday, Nov. 13

8:15 p.m. on Prime Video

New York Jets at New England Patriots

Sunday, Nov. 16

9:30 a.m. on NFL Network

Washington Commanders at Miami Dolphins *(Madrid)*

1 p.m. on CBS

Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Buffalo Bills

Los Angeles Chargers at Jacksonville Jaguars

Cincinnati Bengals at Pittsburgh Steelers

1 p.m. on Fox

Carolina Panthers at Atlanta Falcons

Green Bay Packers at New York Giants

Chicago Bears at Minnesota Vikings

Houston Texans at Tennessee Titans

Week 10 Spotlight

BUFFALO BILLS AT MIAMI DOLPHINS

One week after facing the Chiefs at home, the Bills go on the road to take on the Dolphins (behind QB Tua Tagovailoa, above), the team that finished right behind them in the AFC East last season.

4:05 p.m. on Fox

San Francisco 49ers at Arizona Cardinals

Seattle Seahawks at Los Angeles Rams

4:25 p.m. on CBS

Kansas City Chiefs at Denver Broncos,

Baltimore Ravens at Cleveland Browns

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Detroit Lions at Philadelphia Eagles

Monday, Nov. 17

8:15 p.m. on ESPN/ABC

Dallas Cowboys at Las Vegas Raiders

Bye week:

Indianapolis Colts, New Orleans Saints

WEEK 12

Thursday, Nov. 20

8:15 p.m. on Prime Video

Buffalo Bills at Houston Texans

Sunday, Nov. 23

1 p.m. on CBS

New England Patriots at Cincinnati Bengals

Pittsburgh Steelers at Chicago Bears

Indianapolis Colts at Kansas City Chiefs

New York Jets at Baltimore Ravens

1 p.m. on Fox

New York Giants at Detroit Lions

Seattle Seahawks at Tennessee Titans

Minnesota Vikings at Green Bay Packers

4:05 p.m. on CBS

Cleveland Browns at Las Vegas Raiders

Jacksonville Jaguars at Arizona Cardinals

4:25 p.m. on Fox

Atlanta Falcons at New Orleans Saints

Philadelphia Eagles at Dallas Cowboys

8:20 p.m. on NBC

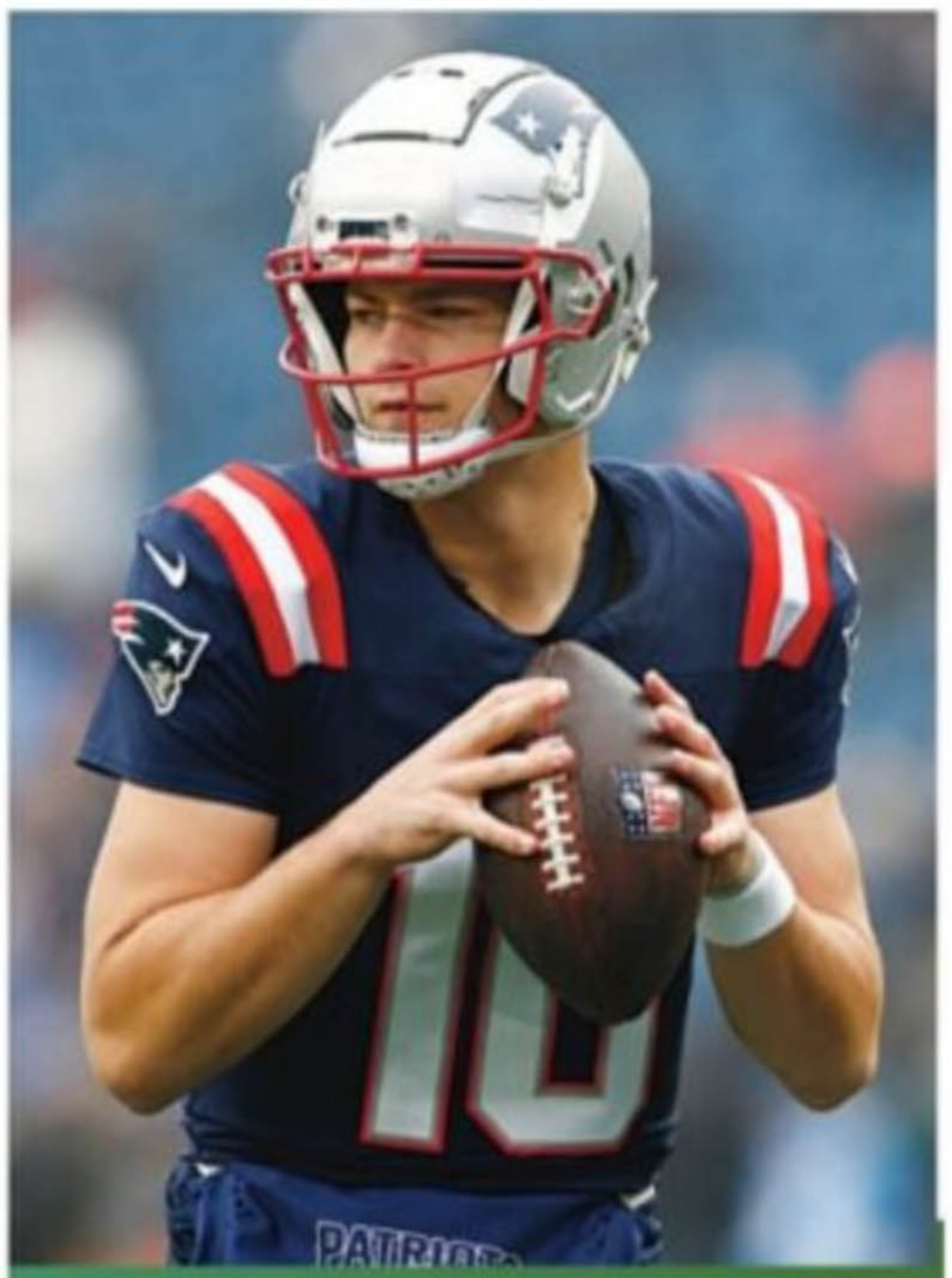
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Los Angeles Rams

ALL TIMES ARE EASTERN

Week 11 Spotlight

DETROIT LIONS AT PHILADELPHIA EAGLES

Wow...this *Sunday Night Football* game will be a doozy. Detroit QB Jared Goff (above) looks to lead the formidable Lions into Philly and upend the defending champs. Good luck!



Week 11 Spotlight

NEW YORK JETS AT NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

The Pats appeared to draft well last year with top pick QB Drake Maye (above). If the Jets have had any success by now, this could be the restart of one of the league's most interesting rivalries.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LOGAN BOWLES/GETTY IMAGES; AMY LEMUS/NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES; DANIELLE PARHIZKARAN/THE BOSTON GLOBE VIA GETTY IMAGES; MEGAN BRIGGS/GETTY IMAGES; CARLY MACKLER/GETTY IMAGES; DAVID EULITT/GETTY IMAGES

HOW TO WATCH EVERY GAME THIS SEASON

Week 13 Spotlight

CINCINNATI BENGALS AT BALTIMORE RAVENS

There will be several Thanksgiving games this season, and you might not find any as competitive as the one between the Ravens—led by two-time MVP Lamar Jackson (above)—and the rising Bengals.

Week 14 Spotlight

CHICAGO BEARS AT GREEN BAY PACKERS

The rivalry between these two NFC North squads has always been legendary. Expect this game to have playoff implications; The Pack, with RB Josh Jacobs (above), had best bring their A game.

WEEK 12 (cont.)

Monday, Nov. 24

8:15 p.m. on ESPN

Carolina Panthers at San Francisco 49ers

Bye week:

Denver, Los Angeles Chargers, Miami, Washington

WEEK 13

Thursday, Nov. 27

(Thanksgiving Day)

1 p.m. on Fox

Green Bay Packers at Detroit Lions

4:30 p.m. on CBS

Kansas City Chiefs at Dallas Cowboys

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Cincinnati Bengals at Baltimore Ravens

Friday, Nov. 28

(Black Friday)

3 p.m. on Prime Video

Chicago Bears at Philadelphia Eagles

Sunday, Nov. 30

1 p.m. on CBS

San Francisco 49ers at Cleveland Browns

Jacksonville Jaguars at Tennessee Titans

Houston Texans at Indianapolis Colts

1 p.m. on Fox

Arizona Cardinals at Tampa Bay Buccaneers

New Orleans Saints at Miami Dolphins

Atlanta Falcons at New York Jets

Los Angeles Rams at Carolina Panthers

4:05 p.m. on Fox

Minnesota Vikings at Seattle Seahawks

4:25 p.m. on CBS

Buffalo Bills at Pittsburgh Steelers

Las Vegas Raiders at Los Angeles Chargers

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Denver Broncos at Washington Commanders

Monday, Dec. 1

8:15 p.m. on ESPN

New York Giants at New England Patriots

WEEK 14

Thursday, Dec. 4

8:15 p.m. on Prime Video

Dallas Cowboys at Detroit Lions

Sunday, Dec. 7

1 p.m. on CBS

Indianapolis Colts at Jacksonville Jaguars

New Orleans Saints at Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Miami Dolphins at New York Jets

Pittsburgh Steelers at Baltimore Ravens

1 p.m. on Fox

Seattle Seahawks at Atlanta Falcons, Tennessee Titans at Cleveland Browns

Washington Commanders at Minnesota Vikings

Chicago Bears at Green Bay Packers

4:05 p.m. on CBS

Denver Broncos at Las Vegas Raiders

Los Angeles Rams at Arizona Cardinals

4:25 p.m. on Fox

Cincinnati Bengals at Buffalo Bills

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Houston Texans at Kansas City Chiefs

Monday, Dec. 8

8:15 p.m. on ESPN/ABC

Philadelphia Eagles at Los Angeles Chargers

Bye week:

Carolina Panthers, New England Patriots, New York Giants, San Francisco 49ers

WEEK 15

Thursday, Dec. 11

8:15 p.m. on Prime Video

Atlanta Falcons at Tampa Bay Buccaneers

WEEK 15 (cont.)

Sunday, Dec. 14

1 p.m. on CBS

Los Angeles Chargers at Kansas City Chiefs

Buffalo Bills at New England Patriots

New York Jets at Jacksonville Jaguars

Baltimore Ravens at Cincinnati Bengals

1 p.m. on Fox

Las Vegas Raiders at Philadelphia Eagles

Arizona Cardinals at Houston Texans

Washington Commanders at New York Giants

Cleveland Browns at Chicago Bears

4:25 p.m. on Fox

Detroit Lions at Los Angeles Rams

Tennessee Titans at San Francisco 49ers

Carolina Panthers at New Orleans Saints

4:25 p.m. on CBS

Green Bay Packers at Denver Broncos

Indianapolis Colts at Seattle Seahawks

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Minnesota Vikings at Dallas Cowboys

Monday, Dec. 15

7:30 p.m. on ESPN

Miami Dolphins at Pittsburgh Steelers

WEEK 16

Thursday, Dec. 18

8:15 p.m. on Prime Video

Los Angeles Rams at Seattle Seahawks

Saturday, Dec. 20

4:30 or 8 p.m. on Fox

Green Bay Packers at Chicago Bears,

Philadelphia Eagles at Washington Commanders,

Sunday, Dec. 21

1 p.m. on CBS

Kansas City Chiefs at Tennessee Titans

New York Jets at New Orleans Saints

New England Patriots at Baltimore Ravens

Buffalo Bills at Cleveland Browns

Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Carolina Panthers

1 p.m. on Fox

Minnesota Vikings at New York Giants

Los Angeles Chargers at Dallas Cowboys

ALL TIMES ARE EASTERN

Champions
SUPER BOWL CHAMPIONS
LIX
PHILADELPHIA EAGLES

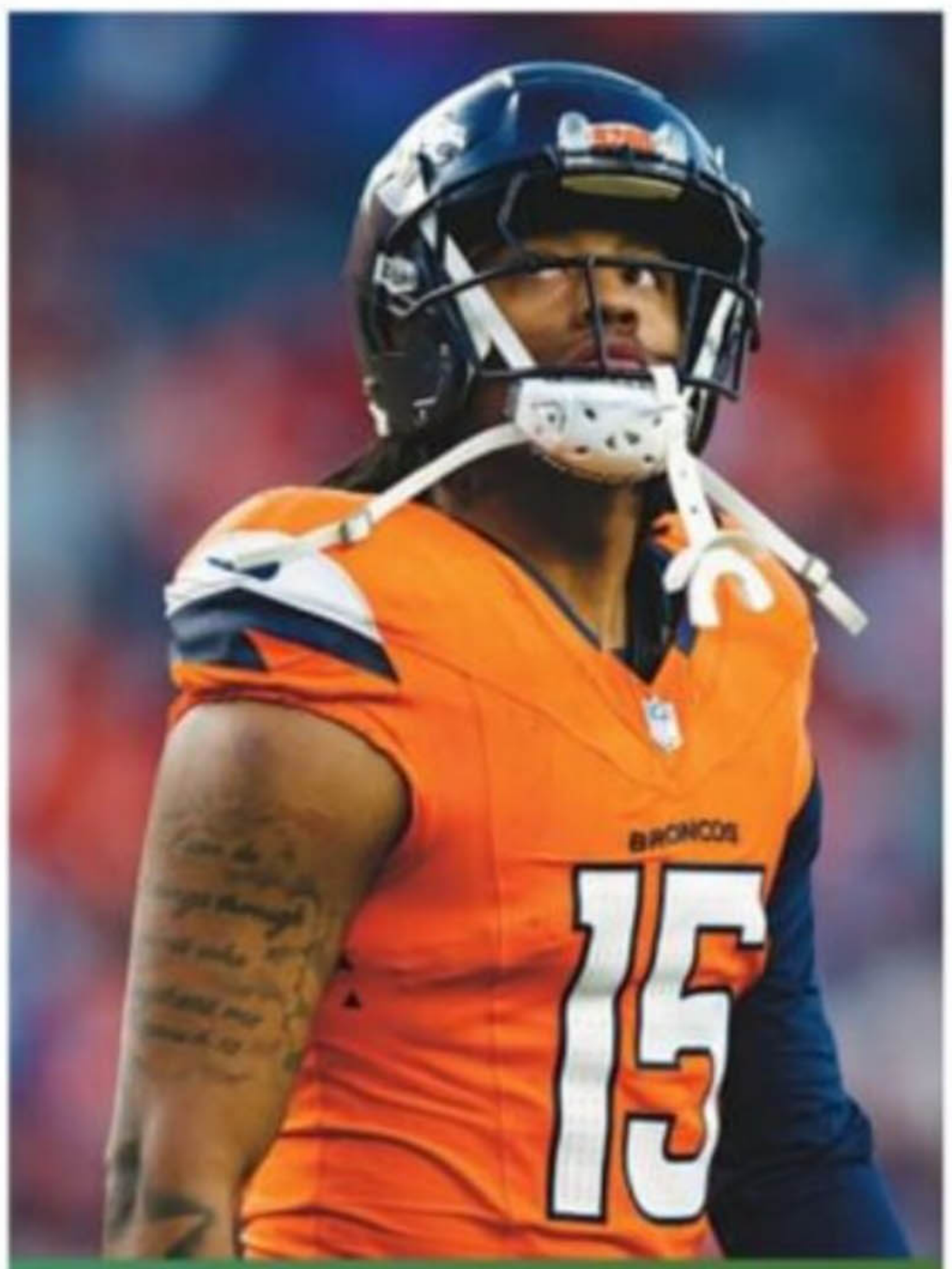
Week 16 Spotlight

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES AT WASHINGTON COMMANDERS

Last season, the Eagles spanked the Commanders 55–23 in the NFC championship game and RB Saquon Barkley (right) rushed for three TDs. Let's assume this rematch will live up to the considerable hype.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MICHAEL OWENS/GETTY IMAGES; KARA DURRETTE/GETTY IMAGES; PATRICK MCDERMOTT/GETTY IMAGES

HOW TO WATCH EVERY GAME THIS SEASON



Week 17 Spotlight

DENVER BRONCOS AT KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

Merry Christmas! Fire up your streaming connection, get on Netflix and watch Denver LB Nik Bonitto try to get his mitts on the Chiefs' Patrick Mahomes. Playoffs are around the corner.

Week 18 Spotlight

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS AT DENVER BRONCOS

In their final game of the regular season, the Broncos play host to fellow division playoff hopefuls the Chargers, with QB Justin Herbert (above). Will this game decide a playoff berth?

WEEK 16 (cont.)

4:05 p.m. on Fox

Atlanta Falcons at Arizona Cardinals

Jacksonville Jaguars at Denver Broncos

4:25 p.m. on CBS

Pittsburgh Steelers at Detroit Lions

Las Vegas Raiders at Houston Texans

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Cincinnati Bengals at Miami Dolphins

Monday, Dec. 22

8:15 p.m. on ESPN

San Francisco 49ers at Indianapolis Colts

WEEK 17

Thursday, Dec. 25 (Christmas Day)

1 p.m. on Netflix

Dallas Cowboys at Washington Commanders

4:30 p.m. on Netflix

Detroit Lions at Minnesota Vikings

8 p.m. on Prime Video

Denver Broncos at Kansas City Chiefs

Saturday, Dec. 27 or Sunday, Dec. 28

*NFL Network has a 4:30 p.m. game and Peacock has an 8 p.m. game on December 27

New York Giants at Las Vegas Raiders

Houston Texans at Los Angeles Chargers

Arizona Cardinals at Cincinnati Bengals

Baltimore Ravens at Green Bay Packers

Seattle Seahawks at Carolina Panthers

Sunday, Dec. 28

1 p.m. on CBS

New Orleans Saints at Tennessee Titans

Pittsburgh Steelers at Cleveland Browns

New England Patriots at New York Jets

1 p.m. on Fox

Jacksonville Jaguars at Indianapolis Colts

Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Miami Dolphins

4:25 p.m. on Fox

Philadelphia Eagles at Buffalo Bills

8:20 p.m. on NBC

Chicago Bears at San Francisco 49ers

Monday, Dec. 29

8:15 p.m. on ESPN

Los Angeles Rams at Atlanta Falcons

WEEK 18

Sunday, Jan. 4

ALL TBD

New York Jets at Buffalo Bills

Kansas City Chiefs at Las Vegas Raiders

Baltimore Ravens at Pittsburgh Steelers

Cleveland Browns at Cincinnati Bengals

Miami Dolphins at New England Patriots

Tennessee Titans at Jacksonville Jaguars

Los Angeles Chargers at Denver Broncos

Indianapolis Colts at Houston Texans

Detroit Lions at Chicago Bears

Green Bay Packers at Minnesota Vikings

New Orleans Saints at Atlanta Falcons

Seattle Seahawks at San Francisco 49ers

Washington Commanders at Philadelphia Eagles

Dallas Cowboys at New York Giants

Carolina Panthers at Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Arizona Cardinals at Los Angeles Rams

ALL TIMES ARE EASTERN

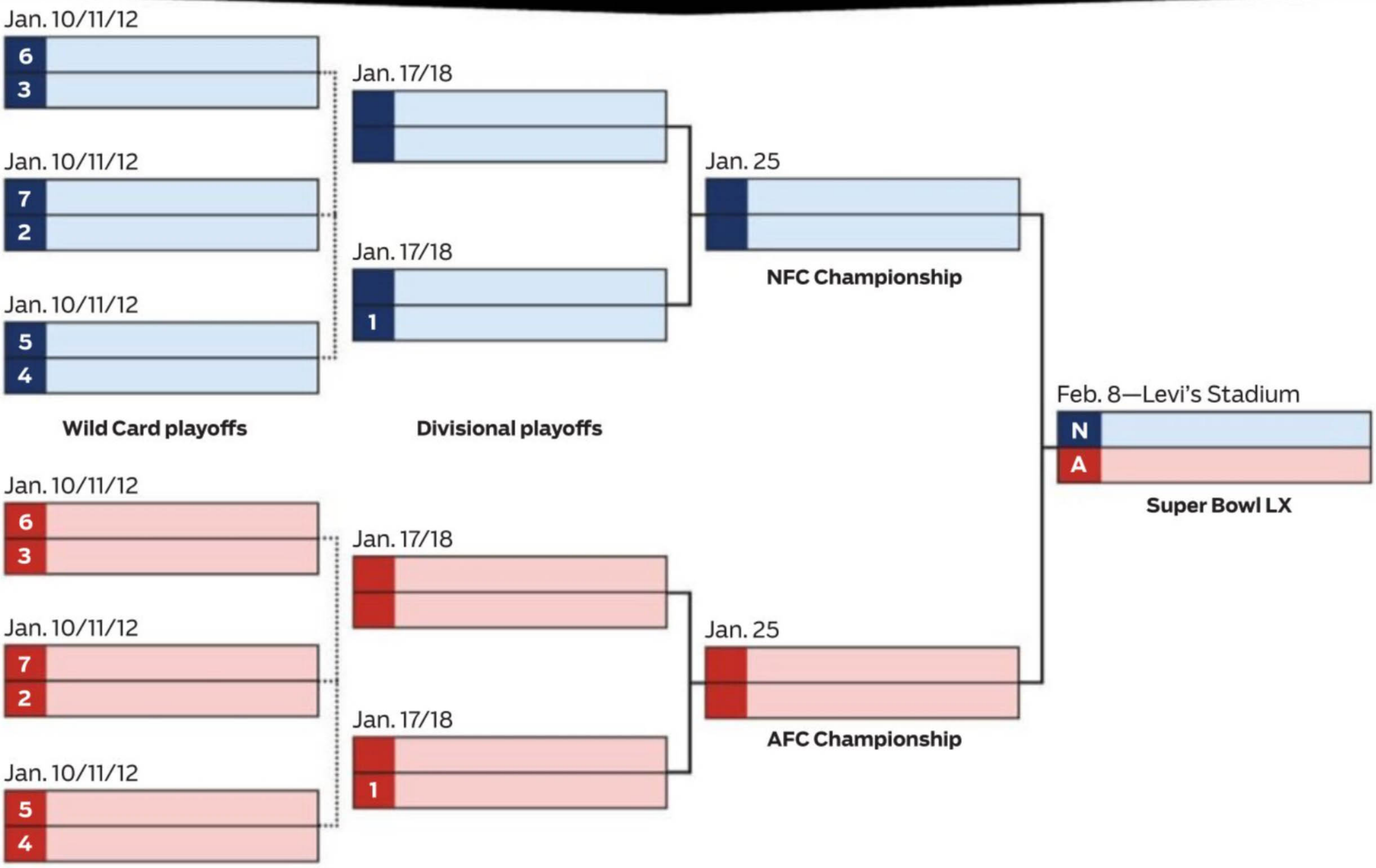
SUPER BOWL LX

6:30 P.M. SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8
LEVI'S STADIUM, SANTA CLARA

ON NBC AND PEACOCK

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JUSTIN EDMONDS/GETTY IMAGES; JOSE CARLOS FAJARDO/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP/TNS/ALAMY LIVE NEWS; CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES

NFL PLAYOFFS 2026


Jan. 10/11/12
6
3
Jan. 10/11/12
7
2
Jan. 10/11/12
5
4
Wild Card playoffs
Jan. 17/18
Jan. 17/18
1
Divisional playoffs
Jan. 25
NFC Championship
Feb. 8—Levi's Stadium
N
A
Super Bowl LX
Jan. 10/11/12
6
3
Jan. 10/11/12
7
2
Jan. 10/11/12
5
4
Jan. 17/18
Jan. 17/18
1
Jan. 25
AFC Championship

NFC EAST

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES

2024 WRAP-UP

After a 2–2 start, the Eagles won 16 of their last 17 games, rolling to the NFC East title behind a punishing ground game fueled by Saquon Barkley. They capped a brilliant season by denying the Chiefs a third-consecutive Lombardi Trophy with the second Super Bowl triumph in Philly's history.

2025 OUTLOOK

There is no reason to envision the Eagles as anything other than a strong Super Bowl contender. They have a solid-as-a-rock roster builder in GM Howie Roseman, a player-friendly head coach in Nick Sirianni, a wonderful offensive line and difference-making players in their prime.

STATS

Head Coach Nick Sirianni
2024 Record 14–3, finished first in division and beat Kansas City in Super Bowl LIX.
Offensive Leaders Jalen Hurts, 361 attempts, 248 completions, 2,903 yards; Saquon Barkley, 345 attempts, 2,005 yards
Defensive Leaders Zack Baun, 151 tackles; C.J. Gardner-Johnson, 6 interceptions; Josh Sweat, 8 sacks

> “Even the way the Eagles practice is elite. They got the best linebacker in the draft, the best running back in the league—you just go across the board.”
>
> **Brian Baldinger**

GAINS

Edge rusher Josh Uche, signed from the Patriots, has sack potential. Edge Azeez Ojulari and CB Adoree' Jackson came over from the Giants. Guard Kenyon Green arrived via a trade. RB AJ Dillon (neck injury) missed the entire 2024 season with the Packers.

LOSSES

Edge Josh Sweat (above) went to the Cardinals and DT Milton Williams to the Patriots, two significant defensive front defections. Guard Mekhi Becton signed with the Chargers. Longtime CB Darius Slay was released and hooked on with the Steelers. DE Bryce Huff was traded to the 49ers.

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

Is there anything **Saquon Barkley** can do for an encore after an incredible season (2,005 rushing yards, 13 touchdowns and a ridiculous 5.8 yards per attempt)? “If there's one guy who can actually repeat and come close to what he did, it's Saquon,” says NFL Network analyst Brian Baldinger.

THE PLAYMAKER

He can do it with his arm and he can do it with his legs. **Jalen Hurts** gets the job done, one way or another, without the flashiest passing stats but with winning plays almost every week. Hurts is 46–20 as a starter (6–3 in the playoffs as well) and has an incredible 52 regular-season rushing touchdowns the past four years.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

Jalen Carter is a 314-pound man-child on the defensive line, with 10.5 sacks in his first two seasons and loads of domination still to come, as the feeling is this 24-year-old is just scratching the surface of his potential.

“A great player,” Baldinger says of the 2025 Pro Bowler.

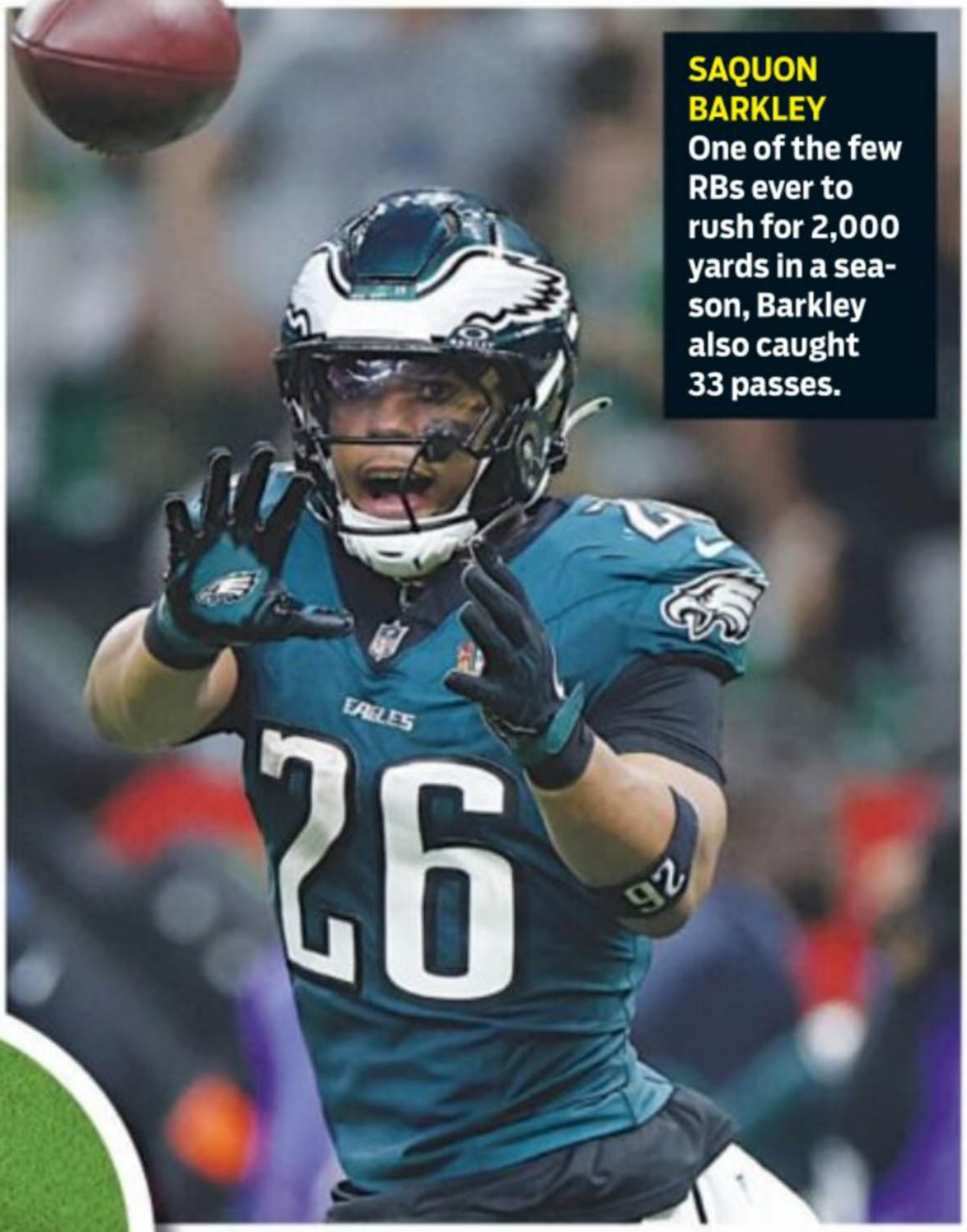
THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

Lane Johnson (left) at right tackle is the epitome of high-level consistency. He has done the job for 12 years and 158 starts and is the centerpiece of a magnificent offensive line. “They've got the best right tackle and they probably have the best left tackle,” Baldinger says, also citing the Eagles' Jordan Mailata. *—PAS*

LEFT: KARA DURRETTE/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: MITCHELL LEFF/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

COOPER DEJEAN The cornerback and punt returner made the all-rookie team last season with 51 tackles, 211 return yards and one playoff interception.



SAQUON BARKLEY One of the few RBs ever to rush for 2,000 yards in a season, Barkley also caught 33 passes.

JALEN HURTS That's the "tush push" QB holding the Lombardi Trophy after the Eagles won Super Bowl LIX; Hurts took home MVP honors and he is now itching for a repeat.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GREGORY SHAMUS/GETTY IMAGES; JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES (2)

NFC EAST

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS

2024 WRAP-UP

What a difference a quarterback makes. Jayden Daniels arrived as the No. 2 pick in the 2024 draft and energized an entire franchise. The Commanders went from 4–13 in 2023 to their highest win total since 1991. Daniels as a rookie notched two playoff victories in his impressive debut year.

2025 OUTLOOK

Daniels figures to get even better, and that bodes well for the team. The offensive line should also be better. Head coach Dan Quinn and GM Adam Peters united to form a strong duo in year one of their tenure in the D.C. area, but the Commanders will not sneak up on anyone this time around.

STATS

Head Coach Dan Quinn

2024 Record 12–5, finished second in the division and lost to Philadelphia in the NFC championship

Offensive Leaders Jayden Daniels, 480 attempts, 331 completions, 3,568 yards; Daniels, 148 rushing attempts, 891 yards

Defensive Leaders Bobby Wagner, 132 tackles; Mike Sainristil, 2 interceptions; Frankie Luvu, 8 sacks

> “They won 12 games last year and it was an incredible turnaround. To go into Detroit in a playoff game and put up 45 points was amazing.”
>
> **Brian Baldinger**

GAINS

Impact trades added a protector for Jayden Daniels in LT Laremy Tunsil (who came over from the Texans) and a target for Daniels in WR Deebo Samuel (of the 49ers). Other signings included safety Will Harris (Saints), DT Javon Kinlaw (Jets) and CB Jonathan Jones (Patriots).

LOSSES

Edge rusher Dante Fowler Jr. (above) left for the division rival Dallas Cowboys. Longtime defensive tackle Jonathan Allen was released and landed with the Vikings. Safety Jeremy Chinn (Raiders), OT Cornelius Lucas (Browns) and WR Dyami Brown (Jaguars) also signed elsewhere.

2025: ONES TO WATCH

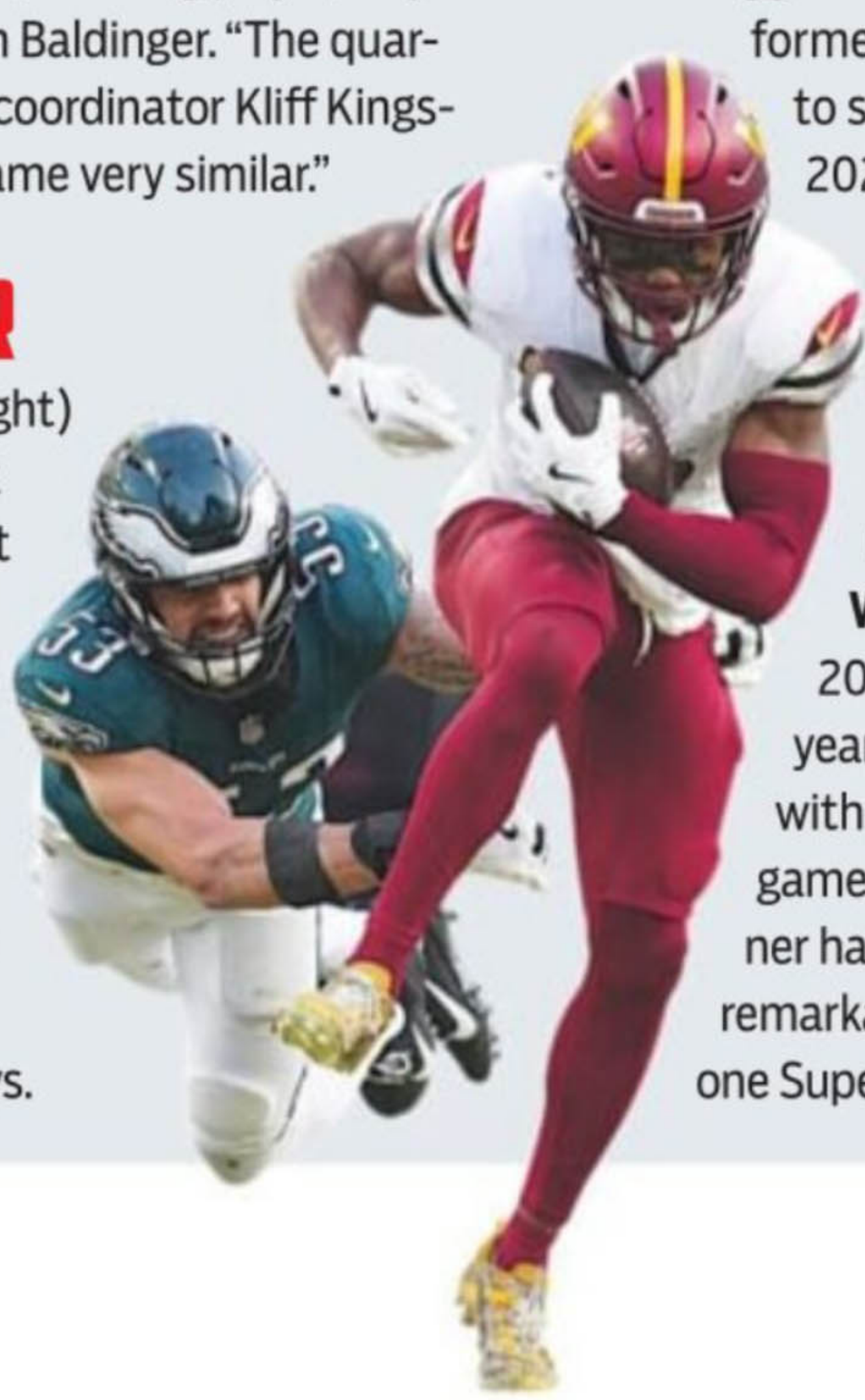
>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

Jayden Daniels was all-everything as a rookie, leading his team in passing (3,568) and rushing (891) yards while accounting for 31 touchdowns. “He’s an amazing individual, amazing player,” says NFL Network analyst Brian Baldinger. “The quarterback and the offensive coordinator Kliff Kingsbury, they really see the game very similar.”

THE PLAYMAKER

All WR **Terry McLaurin** (right) needed was a quarterback to get him the ball and, just like that, he amassed 13 touchdown catches, a career high. “He had his best season, which happens when you have the best quarterback he’s ever played with get him the football,” Baldinger says.



THE DRIVE STOPPER

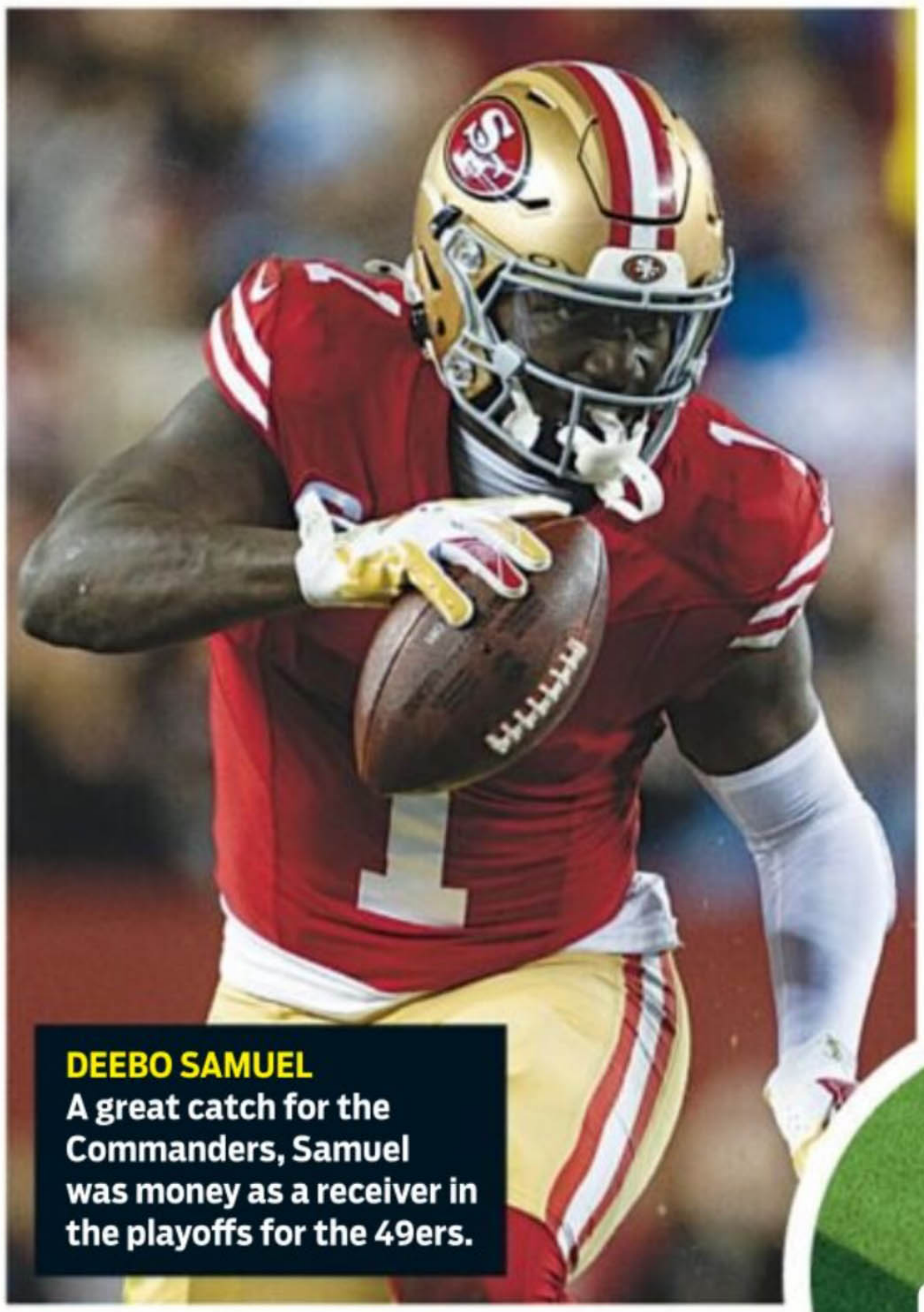
Linebacker **Frankie Luvu** does a lot of everything: 99 tackles, eight sacks, 12 tackles for loss and a career-high 14 quarterback hits. All accomplished with an aggressive style of play. Not bad for a former Jets backup, and good enough to secure him All-Pro honors after the 2024 NFL season.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

Former Seahawks standout **Bobby Wagner** will be 35 by the time the 2025 season kicks off, and his first year with the Commanders was a hit, with 132 tackles and a start in all 17 games during the regular season. Wagner has started 200 of 202 games in a remarkable 13-year career that includes one Super Bowl win. *—PAS*

LEFT: BROOKE SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: MITCHELL LEFF/GETTY IMAGES.

STAR SHOTS



DEEBO SAMUEL
A great catch for the Commanders, Samuel was money as a receiver in the playoffs for the 49ers.

BOBBY WAGNER
The linebacker great made his 10th Pro Bowl last season and is considered one of the best ever at his position.

JAYDEN DANIELS
The league's rookie of the year was difficult for defenses to pin down and led the Commanders to two playoff victories as well.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MICHAEL OWENS/GETTY IMAGES; TIMOTHY NWACHUKWU/GETTY IMAGES; MITCHELL LEFF/GETTY IMAGES

NFC EAST

DALLAS COWBOYS

2024 WRAP-UP

For the first time since 2020, the Cowboys failed to make the playoffs, stumbling to a losing record and 2–7 at home. The fall cost Mike McCarthy his coaching job. QB Dak Prescott's brutal Week 9 hamstring injury was a killer, although the Cowboys were only 3–5 with him as the starter.

2025 OUTLOOK

Owner Jerry Jones rarely does the expected, and his hiring of novice head coach Schottenheimer, who received a promotion from offensive coordinator, surprised the league. Prescott should be 100 percent recovered and there remains plenty of talent for a reversal of fortune.

STATS

Head Coach
Brian Schottenheimer

2024 Record 7–10, finished third in division and did not qualify for the playoffs

Offensive Leaders Dak Prescott, 286 attempts, 185 completions, 1,978 yards; Rico Dowdle, 235 attempts, 1,079 yards

Defensive Leaders Eric Kendricks, 138 tackles; Kendricks, 2 interceptions; Micah Parsons, 12 sacks

> “I don't know that they're any kind of a dominant team. They won seven games. At most, I feel like they could win 10, if everything goes great.”
>
> **Brian Baldinger**

GAINS

There was an attempt to fortify the defensive front with the signings of edge Dante Fowler Jr. (from the Commanders), DE Payton Turner (Saints) and DT Solomon Thomas (Jets). In a trade of significance, WR George Pickens was acquired from the Steelers.

LOSSES

The retirement of future Hall of Fame guard Zack Martin (above) leaves a void. Longtime Dallas DE and four-time Pro Bowler DeMarcus Lawrence left for the Seahawks. Other free agent exits: CB Jourdan Lewis (Jaguars), RB Rico Dowdle (Panthers) and QB Cooper Rush (Ravens).

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

For all his detractors, **Dak Prescott** has a career starting record of 76–46 and usually gives his team an opportunity to win each weekend. “He's a great guy, he's a leader. You never have to question that. He's got his priorities,” NFL Network analyst Brian Baldinger says, but adds, “The Cowboys' playoff record is horrible and Dak has been a part of it.

THE PLAYMAKER

Wide receiver **CeeDee Lamb** did not match his prolific 2023 production, hurt for certain by the team's inconsistency at quarterback, but he still managed to haul in 101 passes for 1,194 yards and six TDs. He can wreck a game if given the chance and now has enigmatic Steelers castoff George Pickens alongside him.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

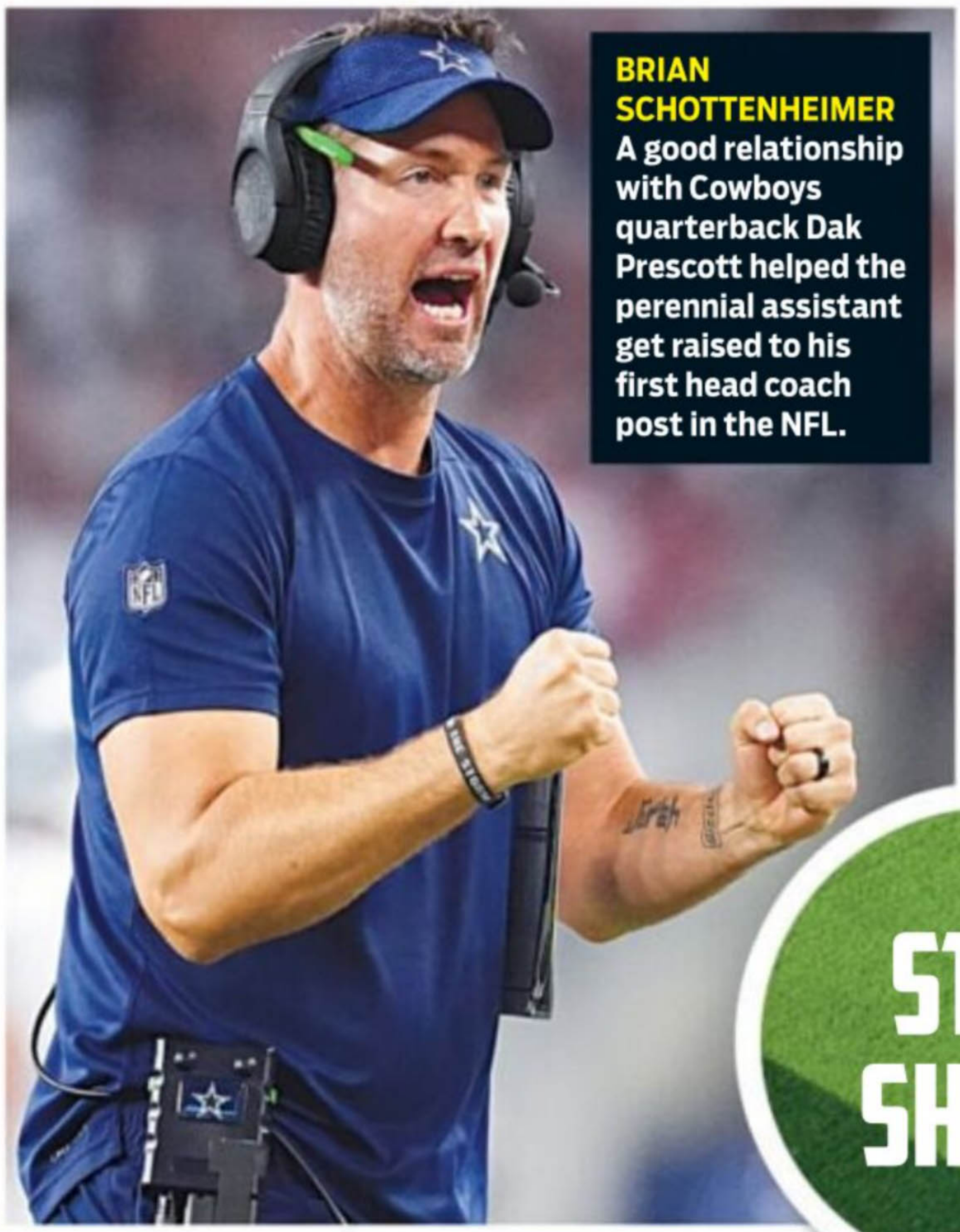
Micah Parsons says what he feels off the field and pretty much does what he wants on it. That works beautifully for the Cowboys. In only 13 games last season, he came away with 12 sacks and 23 quarterback hits and is a terror to block. He missed four games in 2024 with a high ankle sprain and he needs to be on the field.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

The name **KaVontae Turpin** (left) is not front and center in the minds of most fans, but he is a dynamic kick returner. He clocked the fastest speed in the league in 2024 by hitting 22.36 mph on a 64-yard scoring reception and is a TD threat whenever he has the ball. —*PAS*

LEFT: SAM HODDE/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: EMILEE CHINN/GETTY IMAGES.

STAR SHOTS



BRIAN SCHOTTENHEIMER A good relationship with Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott helped the perennial assistant get raised to his first head coach post in the NFL.

CEDEE LAMB His numbers down with Prescott out last season, Lamb hopes to return to form. He led the league in 2023 with 135 catches.

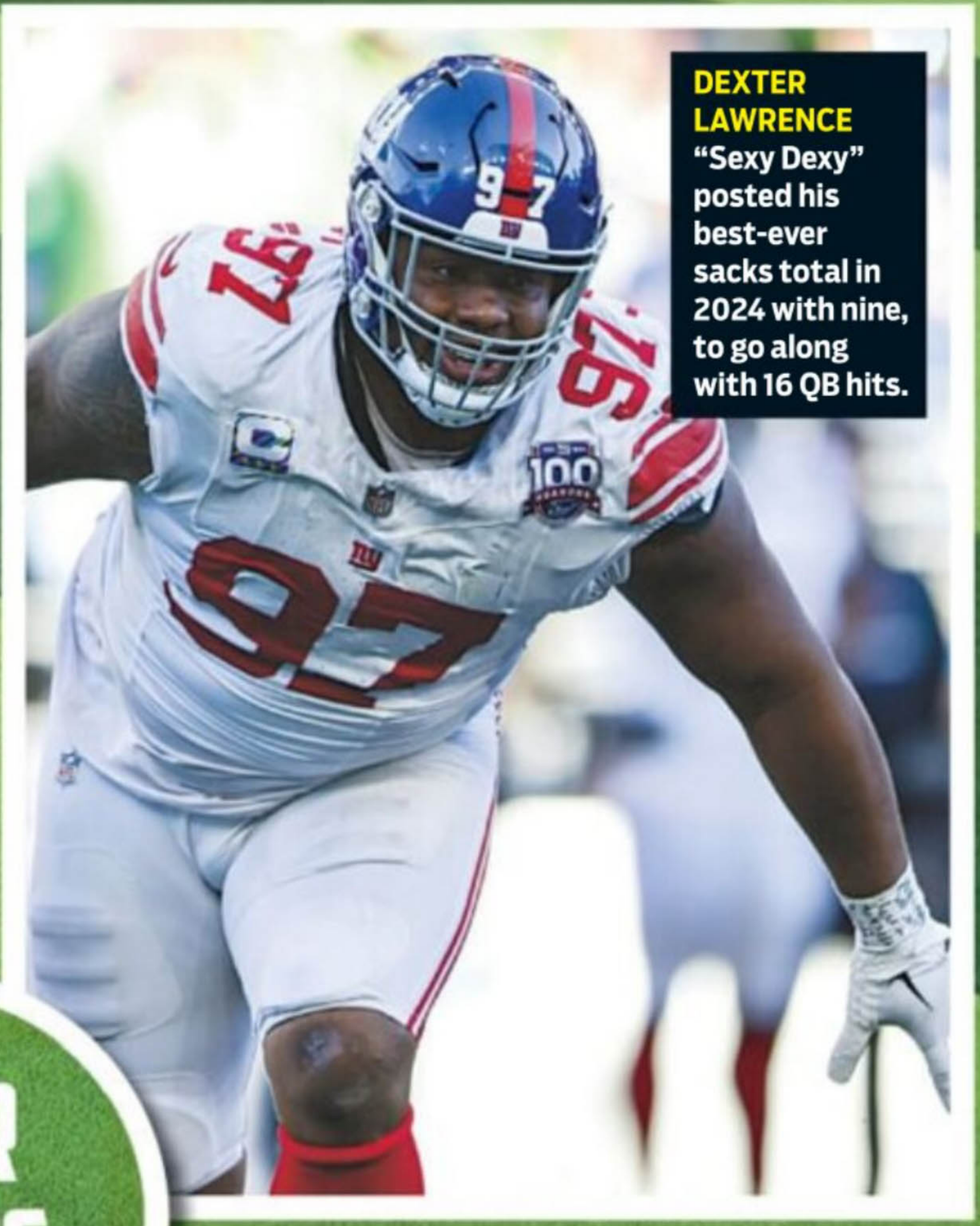
MICAH PARSONS An average of better than 13 sacks per season only tells part of the tale; teams must always focus on the LB when he's on the field.

DAK PRESCOTT A stellar 2023 (but an awful playoffs) followed by a 2024 injury means the 10th-year quarterback is eager to get back to business.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SAM HODDE/GETTY IMAGES; GRANT HALVERSON/GETTY IMAGES; PERRY KNOTTS/GETTY IMAGES; TODD KIRKLAND/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

RUSSELL WILSON
The nine-time Seattle Pro Bowler was Pittsburgh's main starter last year but has not had a truly successful winning season since 2020. Will it happen now?



DEXTER LAWRENCE
"Sexy Dexy" posted his best-ever sacks total in 2024 with nine, to go along with 16 QB hits.

MALIK NABERS
The sixth pick of the 2024 draft was a mighty good choice for the Giants, earning all-rookie team honors and a Pro Bowl invite. He'll be a welcome target in 2025.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PERRY KNOTTS/GETTY IMAGES; RIO GIANCARLO/GETTY IMAGES; LUKE HALES/GETTY IMAGES

NEW YORK GIANTS

NFC EAST

2024 WRAP-UP

The less said about one of the worst seasons in franchise history, the better, as their much-anticipated 100-year centennial celebration went bust. For the first time ever they endured a 10-game losing streak. QB Daniel Jones was benched and then released to end a rough chapter.

2025 OUTLOOK

Head coach Brian Daboll and GM Joe Schoen kept their jobs, despite a two-year downward spiral. Vets Russell Wilson and Jameis Winston and first-round pick Jaxson Dart will vie for QB honors. The Giants roster and depth looks improved, but the schedule is the most difficult in the NFL.

STATS

Head Coach
Brian Daboll
2024 Record 3–14; finished fourth in the division and did not qualify for the playoffs
Offensive Leaders Daniel Jones, 341 attempts, 216 completions, 2,070 yards; Tyrone Tracy, 192 attempts, 839 yards
Defensive Leaders Micah McFadden, 107 tackles; five players with 1 interception; Dexter Lawrence, 9 sacks

> I thought they had a good draft; Jaxson Dart has a pretty live arm. The time's gonna come when he's gonna be on the field this year.
>
> **Brian Baldinger**

GAINS

Beyond signing QBs Russell Wilson from the Steelers and Jameis Winston from the Browns, the team traded up into the first round to draft Jaxson Dart (below, Ole Miss). The secondary was rebuilt with the additions of CB Paulson Adebo from the Saints and the Dolphins' Jevon Holland.

LOSSES

QB Drew Lock started five games in 2024 and signed with the Seahawks. Safety Jason Pinnock (now with the 49ers) and CB Adoree' Jackson (Eagles) left in free agency, as did linebacker Azeez Ojulari, to sign with the Eagles. LB Isaiah Simmons went to the Green Bay Packers.

LEFT: JAMES GILBERT/GETTY IMAGES.
RIGHT: KEVIN SABITUS/GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

At one time, **Russell Wilson** was unquestionably an ace. That's what the Giants need him to be; he signed a one-year deal to hold down the fort and they hope he'll rise to the occasion. Still, it remains to be seen what he has left at 36, coming off tough seasons with the Broncos and one in 2024 with the Steelers.

THE PLAYMAKER

Malik Nabers caught an NFL rookie record 109 passes (for wide receivers), despite missing two games, while amassing 1,204 receiving yards and seven touchdowns, rising above shoddy play from his quarterbacks. Nabers, 21, became the youngest WR in league history with at least two TD receptions in a game.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

Brian Burns (below) arrived via a trade with the Panthers and started 17 games last season while dealing with multiple physical issues. He contributed 8.5 sacks, 17 tackles for loss and 18 quarterback hits, at times showing the "SpidaMan" sack celebration he favors. "He played injured most of the year," reminds NFL Network analyst Brian Baldinger. "He's an excellent player."

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

Brian Daboll won 2022 coach of the year honors for the Giants, who made the playoffs then, but he did not call the plays that year, even though he's known for his acumen in that area. The offense tanked the past two seasons with him calling plays; he has to decide what works best in 2025. *—PAS*

NFC NORTH

DETROIT LIONS

2024 WRAP-UP

With a powerhouse offense led by quarterback Jared Goff, and an opportunistic defense, the 2024 Lions were about as good as it gets, finishing 15–2 despite an injury-battered season in which they had their premier DE Aidan Hutchinson for only five games.

2025 OUTLOOK

The Lions return nearly all their key players and should have Hutchinson back for the start of the season, but the story of 2025 will be how they deal with the losses of both their offensive and defensive coordinators. Still, Detroit remains the team to beat in the NFC North.

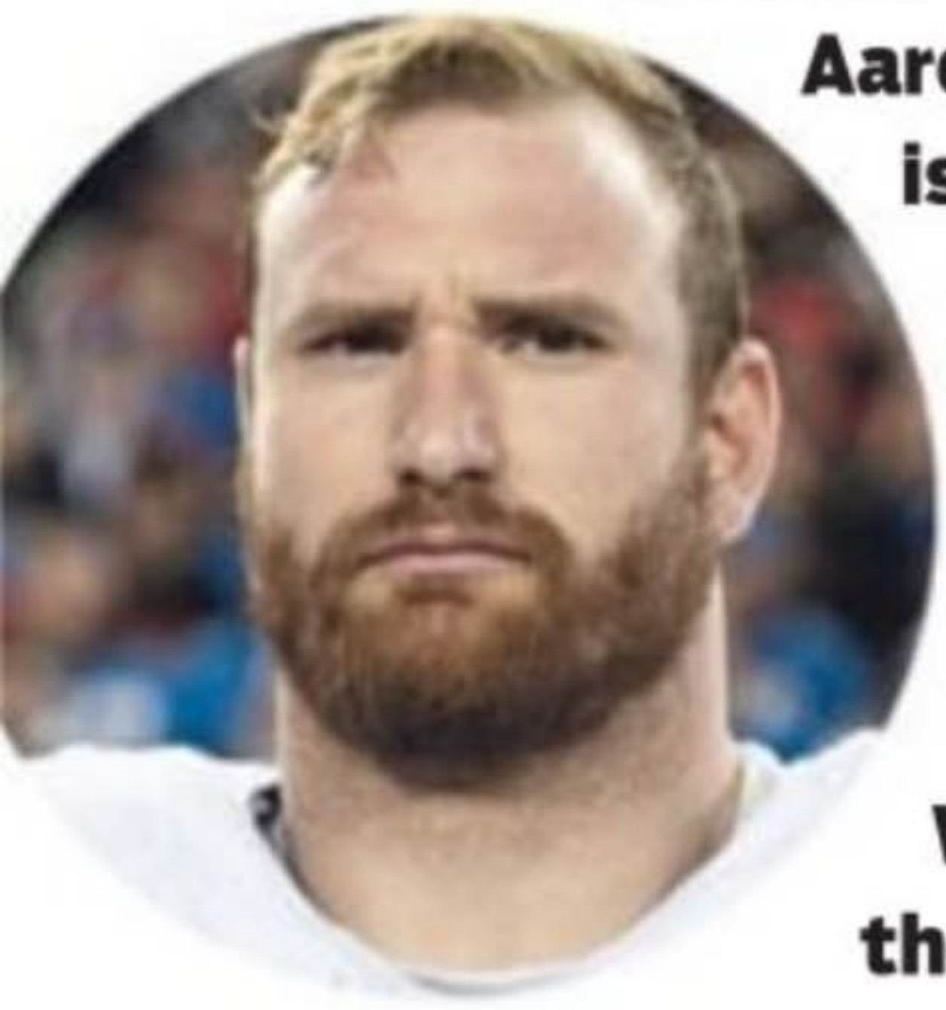
STATS

Head Coach
Dan Campbell
2024 Record 15–2; finished first in the division and lost to Washington in divisional playoffs
Offensive Leaders Jared Goff, 539 attempts, 390 completions, 4,629 yards; Jahmyr Gibbs, 250 attempts, 1,412 yards
Defensive Leaders Jack Campbell, 131 tackles; Kerby Joseph, 9 interceptions; Aidan Hutchinson, 7.5 sacks

> “Head coach Dan Campbell is one of the main reasons the Lions performed well last year. And now Jared Goff has blossomed into a star.”
>
> Amy Trask

GAINS

New offensive coordinator John Morton and defensive coordinator Kelvin Sheppard will have big shoes to fill as they follow in the footsteps of Ben Johnson and Aaron Glenn (who is now the head coach of the New York Jets). The team drafted DT Tyleik Williams in the first round.



LOSSES

In addition to their two top coordinators: Veteran guard Kevin Zeitler left the Lions to join the Titans; four-time Pro Bowl center Frank Ragnow (above) decided to retire, leaving the team without two stalwart linemen; and CB Carlton Davis III signed with the Patriots.

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

Jared Goff threw for 4,629 yards and 37 touchdowns in a season where the Lions had the second-ranked offense in the NFL. The quarterback thrived under departed coordinator Ben Johnson (now head coach of the division rival Chicago Bears), and the big question will be whether Goff can keep up the pace while leading a stacked offense.

THE PLAYMAKER

Averaging an astonishing 5.6 yards per carry, running back **Jahmyr Gibbs** is a game changer whose pairing with David Montgomery will keep defensive coordinators up at night. “If they’re both in the backfield,” says CBS Sports analyst Amy Trask, “who are you going to stop?”

THE DRIVE STOPPER

With a keen eye for the ball, safety **Kerby Joseph** (below) led the NFL in interceptions last season, which had a game-altering impact on opponents trying to keep the ball out of Goff’s hands. “He’s very talented,” Trask says, “and he can stop drives.”

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

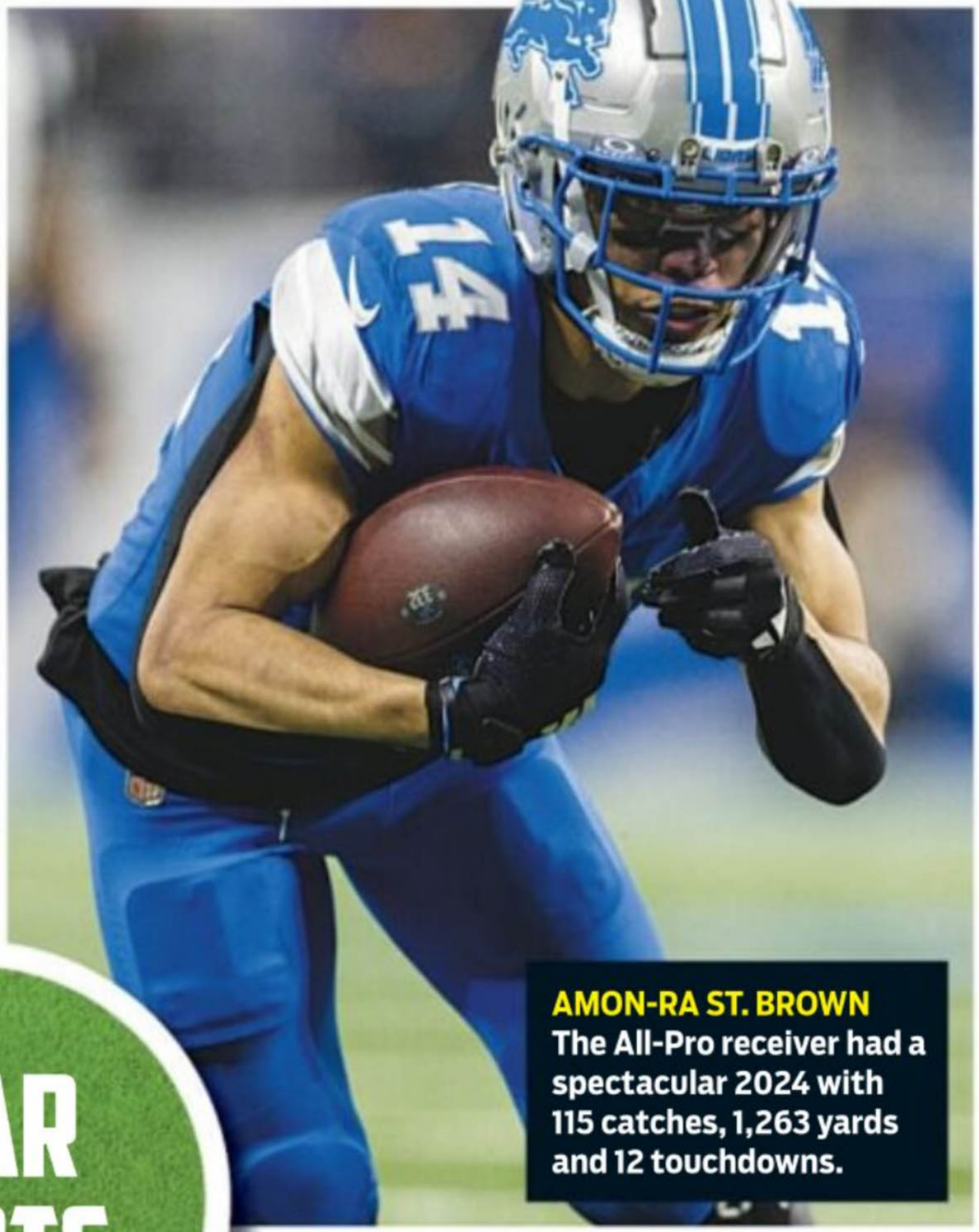
Aidan Hutchinson rang up 7.5 sacks in only five 2024 games before a season-ending leg injury. Now that he’s recovered, Hutchinson’s return, says Trask, will have massive impact. “I call him a ‘Where is he?’ player,” she says. “Every single person on offense is focusing on ‘Where’s Aidan?’ ”

—Josh Karp

LEFT: MICHAEL OWENS/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: RYAN KANG/GETTY IMAGES

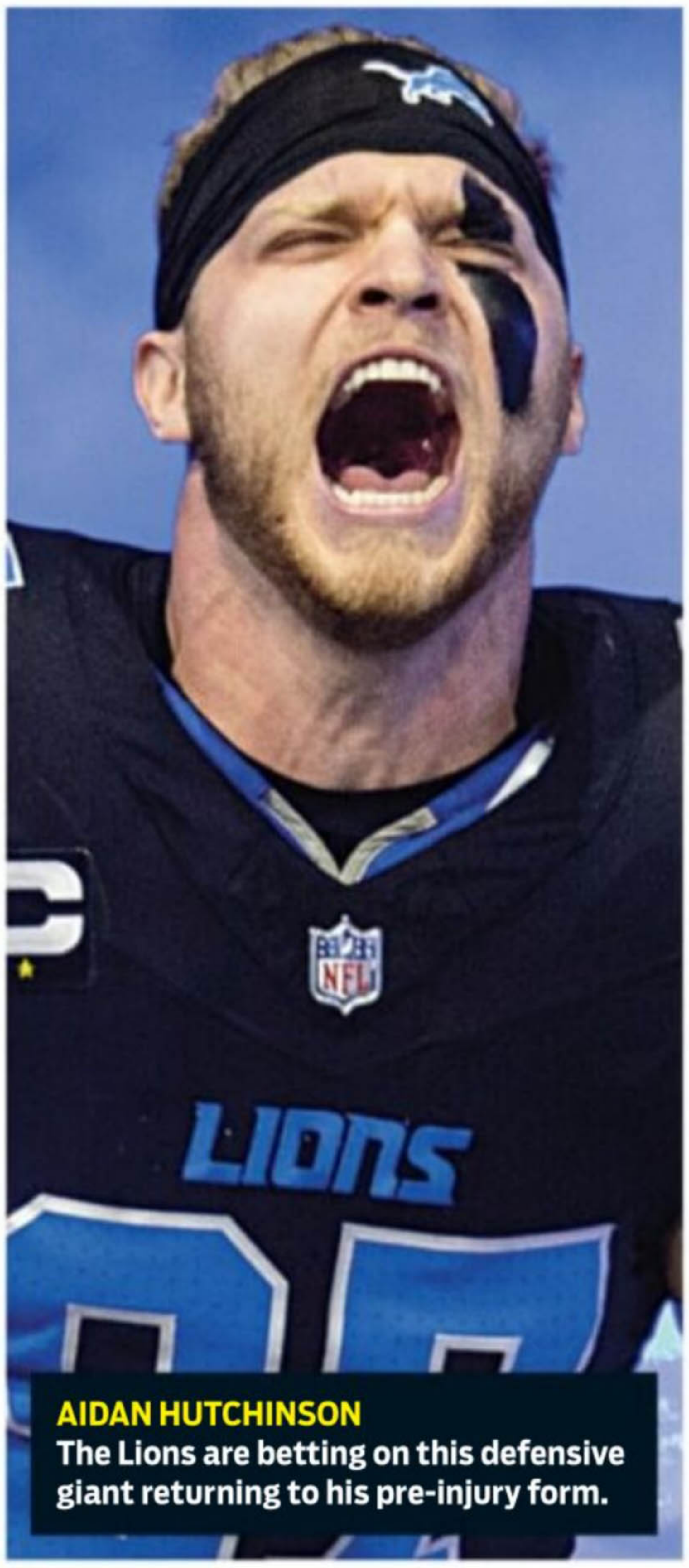
STAR SHOTS

SAM LAPORTA
After his amazing rookie year, the tight end had a solid season in 2024 with 60 catches.



AMON-RA ST. BROWN
The All-Pro receiver had a spectacular 2024 with 115 catches, 1,263 yards and 12 touchdowns.

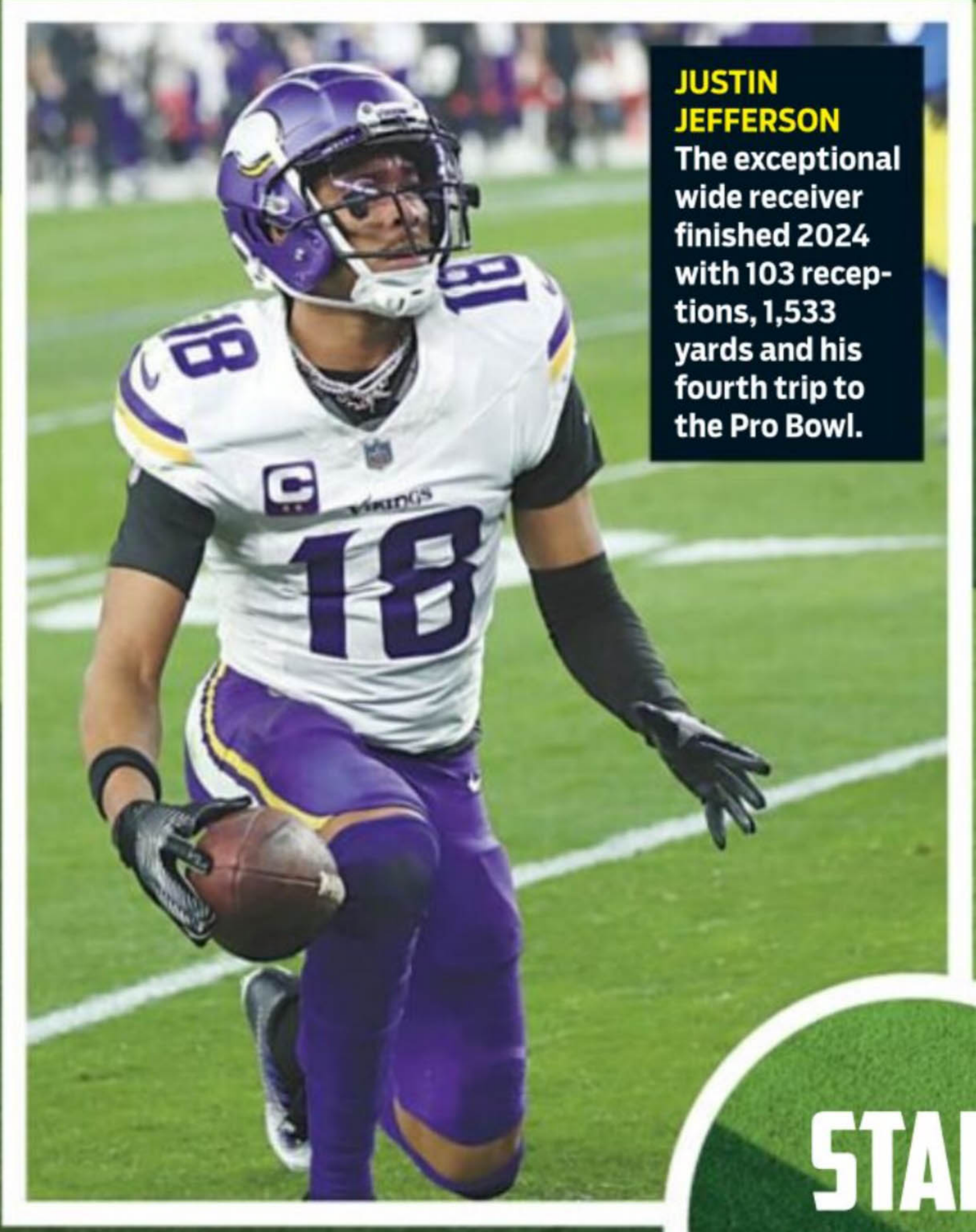
JARED GOFF
Heading into his fifth season for the Lions, Goff is the face of the franchise; his 72.4 completion percentage last year nearly topped the NFL.



AIDAN HUTCHINSON
The Lions are betting on this defensive giant returning to his pre-injury form.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NIC ANTAYA/GETTY IMAGES; MICHAEL OWENS/GETTY IMAGES (3)

STAR SHOTS



JUSTIN JEFFERSON The exceptional wide receiver finished 2024 with 103 receptions, 1,533 yards and his fourth trip to the Pro Bowl.

J.J. McCARTHY All hopes are riding on the young QB, now recovered from a knee injury and ready to lead the team.

T.J. HOCKENSON After spending 2024 dealing with an early-year injury, the tight end looks to return to his stellar 95-reception form from the 2023 season.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BRUCE YEUNG/GETTY IMAGES; STEPHEN MATUREN/GETTY IMAGES; CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES

MINNESOTA VIKINGS

NFC NORTH

2024 WRAP-UP

After losing rookie quarterback J.J. McCarthy to injury before the season even started, the story of 2024 for the Vikings was the remarkable performance of backup QB Sam Darnold, who stepped in and had a career season, leading his team to a 14–3 record and making his first Pro Bowl.

2025 OUTLOOK

McCarthy will be the story now, and Vikings fans have high expectations that he will lead them to even greater success than Darnold. With a relentless attacking defense and Justin Jefferson at wideout, McCarthy will have plenty of help as he tries to get Minnesota to the next level.

STATS

Head Coach Kevin O'Connell

2024 Record 14–3, finished second in the division and lost to the Rams in wild-card playoffs

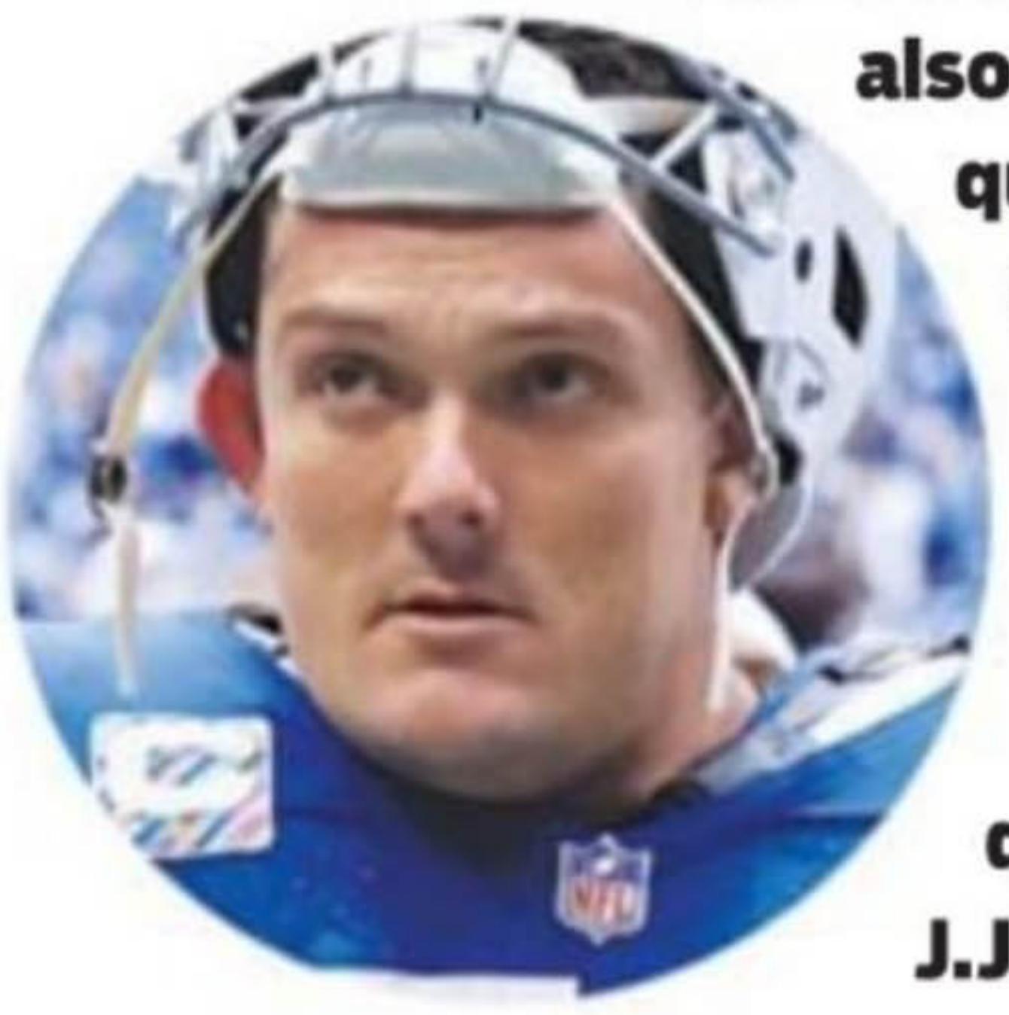
Offensive Leaders Sam Darnold, 545 attempts, 361 completions, 4,319 yards; Aaron Jones, 255 attempts, 1,138 yards

Defensive Leaders Blake Cashman, 112 tackles; Byron Murphy, 6 interceptions; Jonathan Greenard, 12 sacks

> "After bringing out the best in Sam Darnold and going 14–3, we'll see what happens with J.J. McCarthy in his first season at quarterback."
>
> **Amy Trask**

GAINS

Needing to strengthen up the offensive line, the Vikings acquired center Ryan Kelly (below) and guard Will Fries and drafted Ohio State's Donovan Jackson, while also bringing in quarterback Sam Howell to back up and mentor their young starting quarterback, J.J. McCarthy.



LOSSES

It's not often a team walks away from a quarterback with over 4,000 yards passing and 35 TDs, but that's what the Vikings did, declining to overpay for Sam Darnold, who signed with the Seahawks. Other QBs Nick Mullens (Jacksonville) and Daniel Jones (Colts) also left.

LEFT: JUSTIN CASTERLINE/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: STEPHEN MATUREN/GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

An absolutely dominant receiver, **Justin Jefferson** caught passes from multiple quarterbacks during the last two years and will have J.J. McCarthy under center in 2025, which isn't a problem, according to CBS Sports analyst Amy Trask. "He's trying to make the quarterback look the best he can be. And that's exactly what he does."

THE PLAYMAKER

Linebacker **Andrew Van Ginkel** finished 2024 with 11.5 sacks as part of a dynamic duo with Jonathan Greenard. "It's math," Trask says. "You're going to double one of them, but what about the other? You can't put four men on two guys."

GREENARD
58

THE DRIVE STOPPER

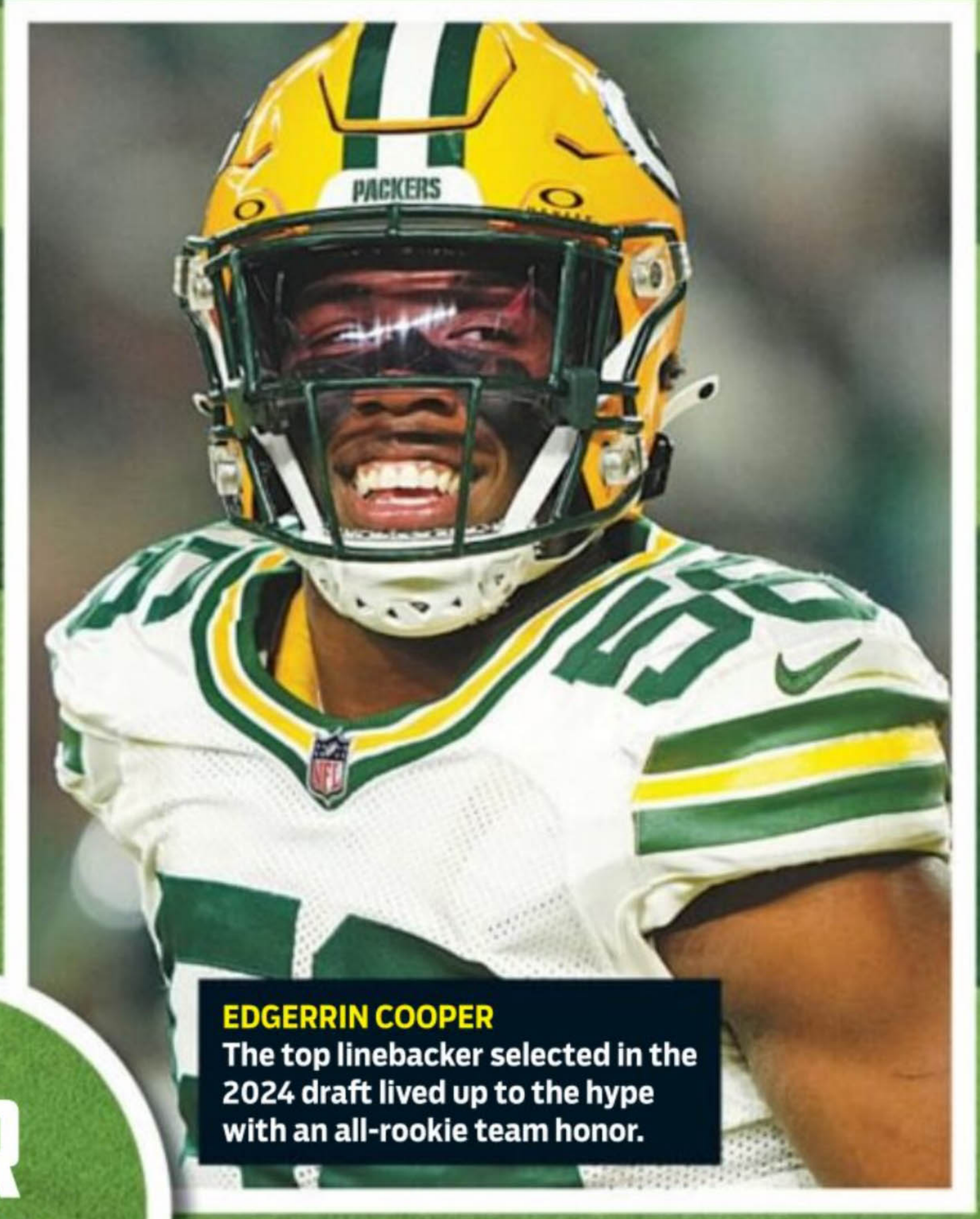
At 260 pounds, **Jonathan Greenard** (below) is a big, disruptive force with the versatility to play along the line and stop the run or get after the quarterback. He finished 2024 with 12 sacks, tying him for fifth in the league.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

"Everybody rightfully focuses on Justin Jefferson," says Trask of the team's premier receiver. "But **Aaron Jones** should get a lot more attention." Finishing ninth in the league with 1,138 yards, Jones averaged 4.5 yards per carry, kept defenses honest and was instrumental in setting up the team's passing game. —*JK*

STAR SHOTS

RASHAN GARY
The sixth-year defensive end started all 17 games in 2024 and ended up making the Pro Bowl for the first time.



EDGERRIN COOPER
The top linebacker selected in the 2024 draft lived up to the hype with an all-rookie team honor.

JORDAN LOVE
In his first season with a four-year extension, Love struggled with a knee injury and returned with a fine season, but expectations are high for 2025.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PATRICK MCDERMOTT/GETTY IMAGES; COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES; MITCHELL LEFF/GETTY IMAGES

GREEN BAY PACKERS

NFC NORTH

2024 WRAP-UP

The Packers have had only one losing season since 2008 and often stay in contention, which they did again behind quarterback Jordan Love and the stellar play of running back Josh Jacobs, going 11–6 but only 1–5 in their division, and losing their final game at home to the rival Bears.

2025 OUTLOOK

Perennially in the playoff picture, the Packers head into 2025 with a big upgrade at wide receiver. First-round pick Matthew Golden becomes the latest weapon for Love, whose development will likely decide if the Packers take it up a notch and challenge for the NFC North title.

STATS

Head Coach Matt LaFleur

2024 Record 11–6; finished third in the division and lost to Philadelphia in wild-card playoffs

Offensive Leaders Jordan Love, 425 attempts, 268 completions, 3,389 yards; Josh Jacobs, 301 attempts, 1,329 yards

Defensive Leaders Quay Walker, 102 tackles; Xavier McKinney, 8 interceptions; Rashan Gary, 7.5 sacks

> “I think we’ll continue to see improvement from Jordan Love, and I wouldn’t be surprised to see them win nine, 10 or 11 games.”
>
> **Amy Trask**

GAINS

Hoping to strengthen their receiving corps, the Packers drafted Texas’ Matthew Golden (below) in the first round while signing receiver Mecole Hardman from Kansas City, who will start out returning kicks. Former 49er guard Aaron Banks also signed a four-year deal with the team.

LOSSES

The Packers lost run-stopping defensive tackle T.J. Slaton to free agency and gave up on 2021 first-round pick Eric Stokes, who failed to emerge as the kind of cornerback they wanted. Other departures: often hurt CB Jaire Alexander and center Josh Myers (now with the Jets).

LEFT: LOGAN BOWLES/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

Josh Jacobs (right) left the Raiders in March 2024 and never looked back, becoming the centerpiece of the Packers’ running game with over 1,300 yards and 15 touchdowns last season, while taking pressure off young QB Jordan Love.

THE PLAYMAKER

A rookie in 2024, **Edgerrin Cooper** got better as the season went on. Now ranked among the best linebackers in the NFL, the speedy defender occupies a unique position, according to CBS Sports analyst Amy Trask. “Not all good linebackers are good pass rushers, and not all dominant pass rushers can play linebacker. Cooper can do both.”

THE DRIVE STOPPER

Tying for second in the league with eight interceptions, safety **Xavier McKinney** is a game changer who can break the other teams’ hearts with the kind of picks that suck the air out of opposing offenses. He added 88 tackles to his total in 2024 as well. The first-team All-Pro also recorded 11 pass deflections.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

Making 20 of 21 field goals and all of his extra points in 2024, placekicker **Brandon McManus** was as steady as they come in his first season with the Packers, a pattern that may continue in 2025 after a new three-year contract. —*JK*

NFC NORTH

CHICAGO BEARS

2024 WRAP-UP

After the Bears drafted Caleb Williams and Rome Odunze, experts and fans anticipated they would be a surprise team in 2024. But everything fell apart when the 4–3 Bears suffered a disastrous loss to the Commanders on a last-second Hail Mary pass that sent their season into a tailspin.

2025 OUTLOOK

The Bears look like they might have figured things out with the hiring of offensive-minded head coach Ben Johnson and a retooled O-line. If Williams can play near his potential, and the defense returns to 2023 form, the Bears will have a chance to compete for the division.

STATS

Head Coach
Ben Johnson

2024 Record 5–12, finished fourth in division; did not qualify for playoffs

Offensive Leaders Caleb Williams, 562 attempts, 351 completions, 3,541 yards; D'Andre Swift, 253 attempts, 959 yards

Defensive Leaders Kevin Byard III, 130 tackles; Tyrique Stevenson and Jaylon Johnson, 2 interceptions; Montez Sweat, 5.5 sacks

> “We saw what Ben Johnson did in Detroit; we'll see if that continues in Chicago, where he must structure an offense for Caleb Williams to succeed.”
>
> **Amy Trask**

GAINS

Focusing on their offensive line, the Bears signed center Drew Dalman and traded for Chiefs lineman Joe Thuney, while also acquiring tight end Colston Loveland and wide receiver Luther Burden III via the draft. These are some of the tools new head coach Ben Johnson (left) will have.

LOSSES

The Bears let talented but oft-injured offensive lineman Teven Jenkins leave through free agency and did the same with wide receiver Keenan Allen, whose departure made way for draft pick Luther Burden of Missouri. Also gone: WR Keenan Allen and DE DeMarcus Walker.

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

Despite flashes of brilliance, quarterback **Caleb Williams** had an uneven 2024. With a revamped O-line, the addition of two young receivers and new head coach Ben Johnson, CBS Sports analyst Amy Trask thinks we'll see more of what people expected last year. “Johnson will position Caleb to be his best. I think we're going to see significant improvement.”

THE PLAYMAKER

D'Andre Swift (right) led the Bears with nearly 1,000 rushing yards behind a crumbling, subpar line. This season he'll draw less focus and should shine in a system designed by Johnson, who's famous for putting his skill players in the right places and situations to take advantage of their talent.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

After 12.5 sacks in 2023, defensive end **Montez Sweat** labored through leg injuries and that total dropped to 5.5 last season. Now healthy, Sweat should return to elite status on a team where he'll have more help on the defensive line and won't face as many double teams when going after the quarterback.

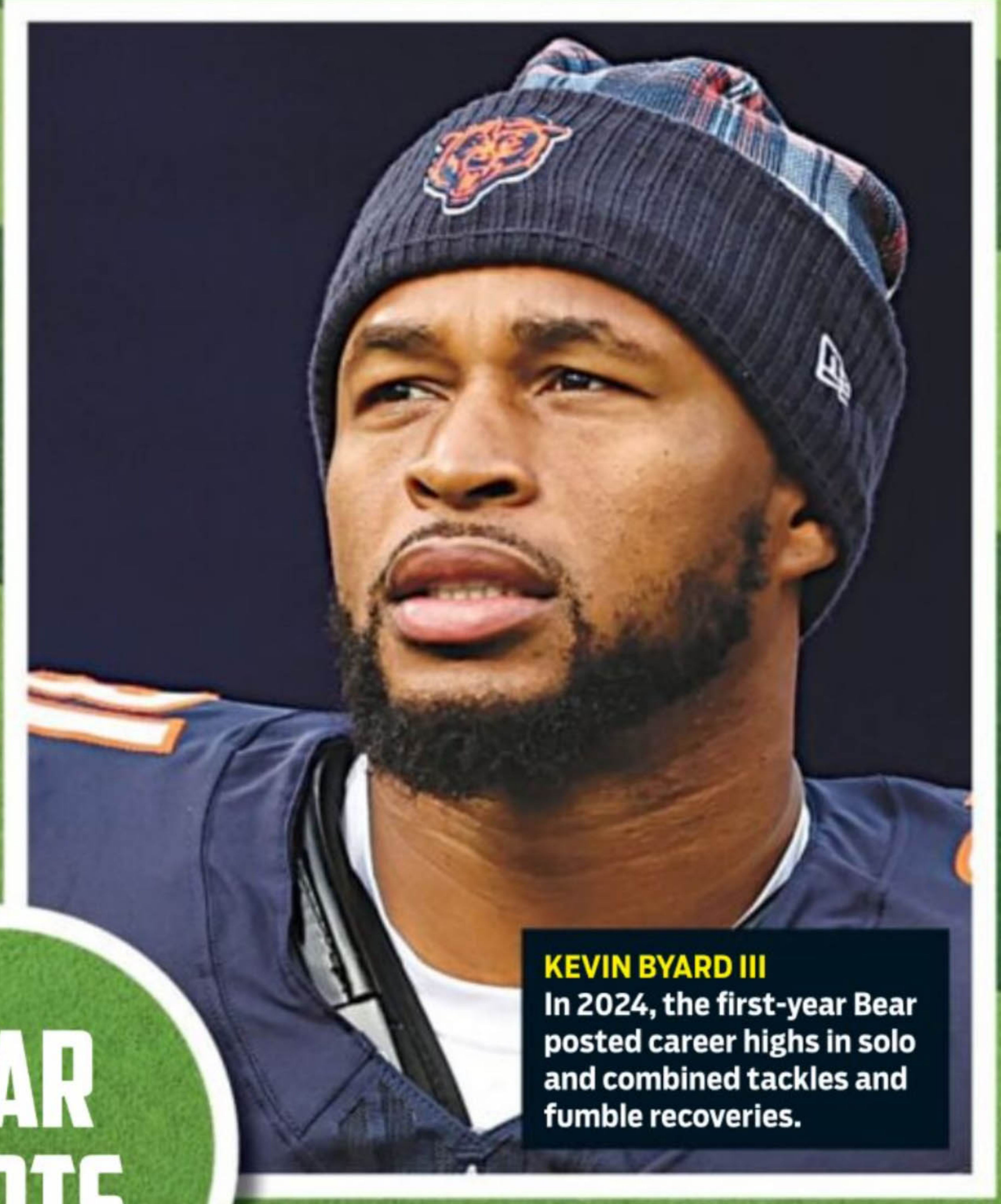
THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

Hiring the hottest candidate on the market, the Bears put their future in the hands of **Ben Johnson**, who helped turn around the division rival Lions. “We saw what he did with Jared Goff,” Trask says. “He's going to look at Caleb's skills and build [on them].” *—JK*

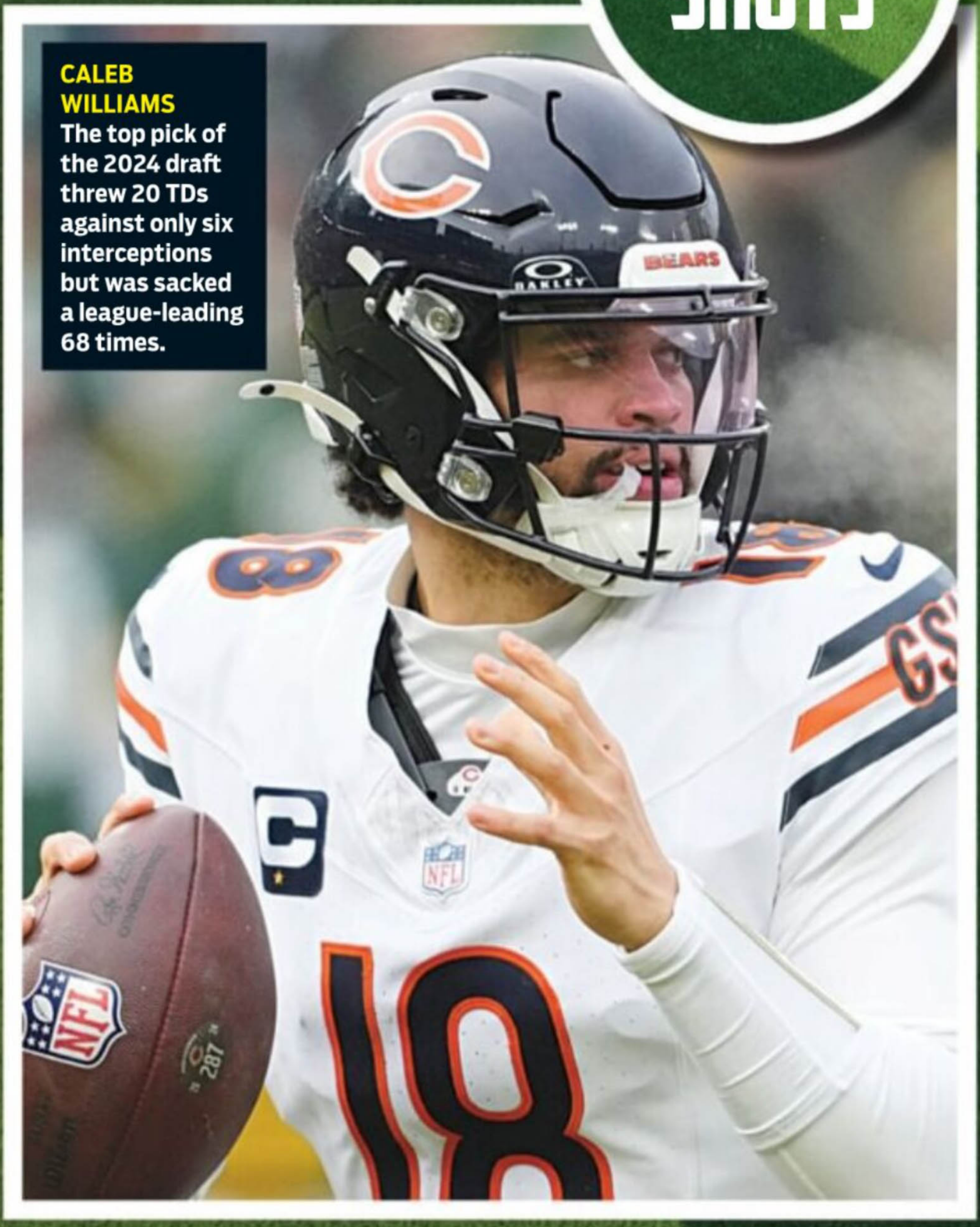
LEFT: MICHAEL REAVES/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

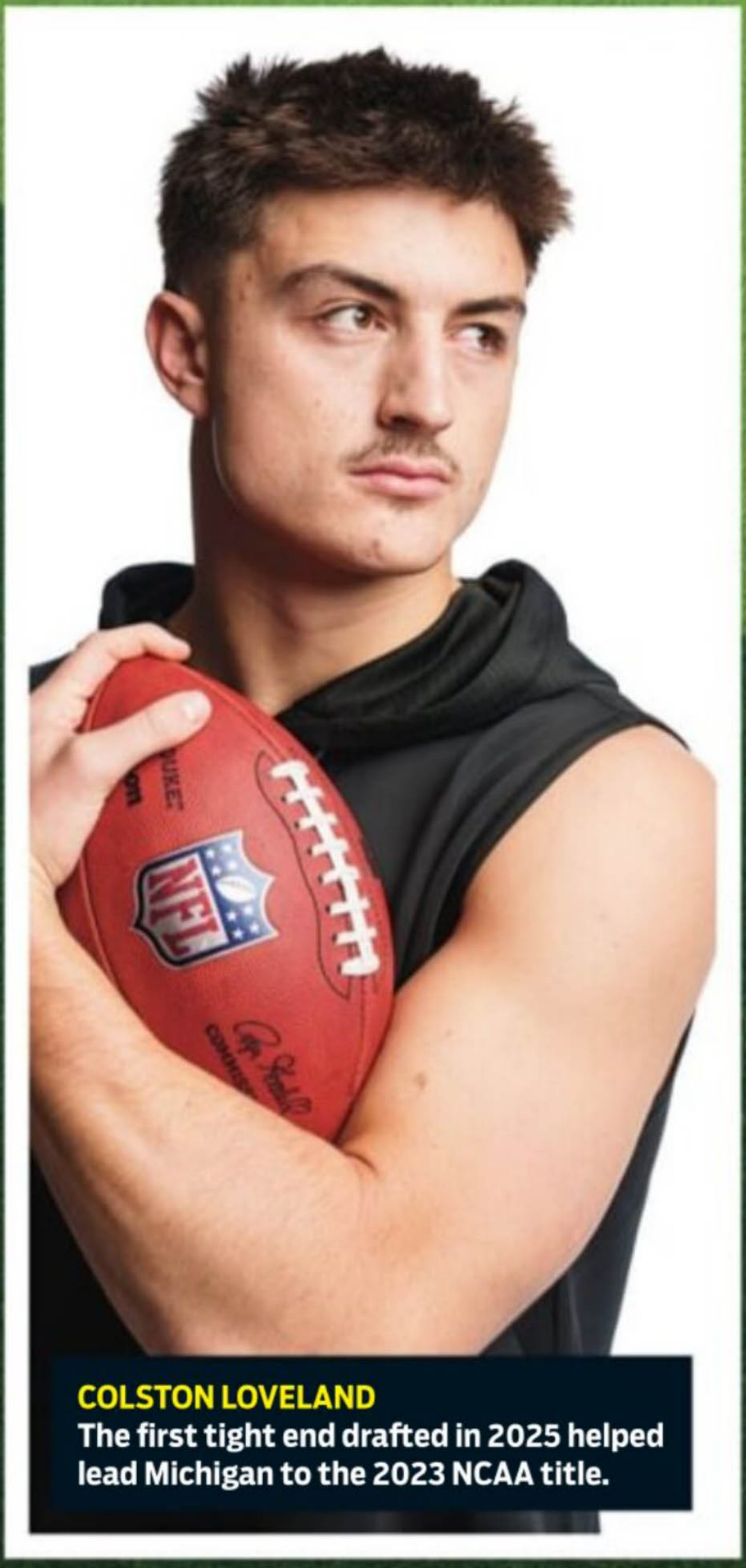
T.J. EDWARDS
The stalwart linebacker, now in his seventh season, last year had a career-high four sacks.



KEVIN BYARD III
In 2024, the first-year Bear posted career highs in solo and combined tackles and fumble recoveries.



CALEB WILLIAMS
The top pick of the 2024 draft threw 20 TDs against only six interceptions but was sacked a league-leading 68 times.



COLSTON LOVELAND
The first tight end drafted in 2025 helped lead Michigan to the 2023 NCAA title.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: KEVIN SABITUS/GETTY IMAGES (2); TODD ROSENBERG/GETTY IMAGES; PATRICK MCDERMOTT/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

BUCKY IRVING
In addition to his 1,122 rushing yards, the rookie caught 47 passes for 392 yards last season, making the RB a major threat out of the backfield.

MIKE EVANS
The six-time Pro Bowler battled hamstring issues last season but still topped 1,000 yards receiving.

BAKER MAYFIELD
After last season, the stellar QB earned his second-straight Pro Bowl honors. His 41 TDs in 2024 were a career-best number for him.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JONATHAN BACHMAN/GETTY IMAGES; MIKE EHRMANN/GETTY IMAGES; ELSA/GETTY IMAGES

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

NFC SOUTH

2024 WRAP-UP

After Week 10, the Bucs trailed Atlanta by two games and had already lost to their division rivals twice. They finished the year winning six of their last seven regular season games for their fourth-straight division title, the longest such streak in the NFC.

2025 OUTLOOK

In a division with a lot of question marks, the Bucs have continuity. As good as QB Baker Mayfield was last year, wideouts Chris Godwin and Mike Evans both missed time. If they're healthy for the entire '25 campaign, the Bucs will be in great shape to again take the NFC South crown.

STATS

Head Coach
Todd Bowles
2024 Record 10–7, first in division, lost to Washington in wild-card round
Offensive Leaders Baker Mayfield, 570 attempts, 407 completions, 4,500 yards; Bucky Irving, 207 attempts, 1,122 yards
Defensive Leaders Lavonte David, 122 tackles; Tykee Smith, Zyon McCollum, 2 interceptions; Calijah Kancey, 7.5 sacks

> “I think they're going to have a strong campaign again this year. I don't really see any big weakness for Baker Mayfield and this offense.”
>
> Jen Hale

GAINS

Given the injuries to WRs last year, the team drafted Emeka Egbuka (below) in the first round. Other additions: LB Haason Reddick was signed from the Jets, punter Riley Dixon left the Broncos for a two-year deal, and center Benjamin Morrison was drafted in the second round.

LOSSES

Center Robert Hainsey signed a three-year deal with Jacksonville, DE Joe Tryon-Shoyinka left for the Browns in a one-year deal, CB Tavierre Thomas is now a Viking, LB K.J. Britt signed a one-year deal with the Dolphins and OT Justin Skule joined Thomas on the Vikings squad.

LEFT: JULIO AGUILAR/GETTY IMAGES.
RIGHT: CLIFF WELCH/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

In his second year in Tampa Bay, **Baker Mayfield** had a career year, finishing third in the league in passing yards and fifth in completion percentage. The Bucs are looking for their franchise QB to lead them to another division title.

THE PLAYMAKER

Make that playmakers: The duo of **Mike Evans** and **Chris Godwin** are among the most dynamic WR combos in the game. It's amazing to think Mayfield became the fourth player in history to pass for 4,000 yards, throw for 40 touchdowns and complete more than 70% of his passes in a year in which Godwin suffered a season-ending injury just seven weeks in.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

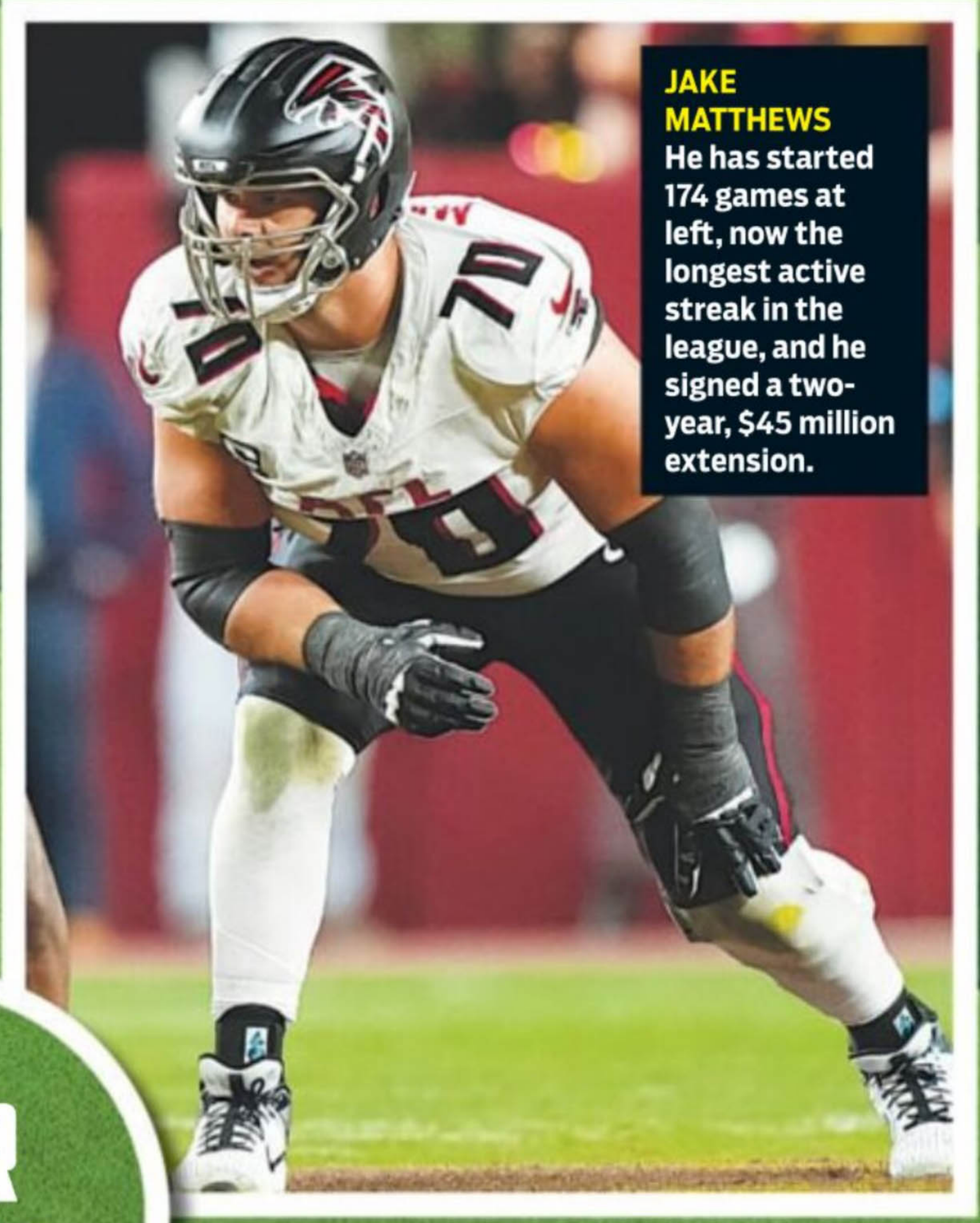
After a drama-filled season with the Jets, LB **Haason Reddick** (below) is in Tampa on a one-year deal with hopes he can improve a pass rush that was among the league's worst. Reddick felt undervalued in Philadelphia and saw his season with the Jets derail. The Bucs are hoping his stop in Tampa is a “vengeance campaign,” says Fox NFL reporter Jen Hale.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

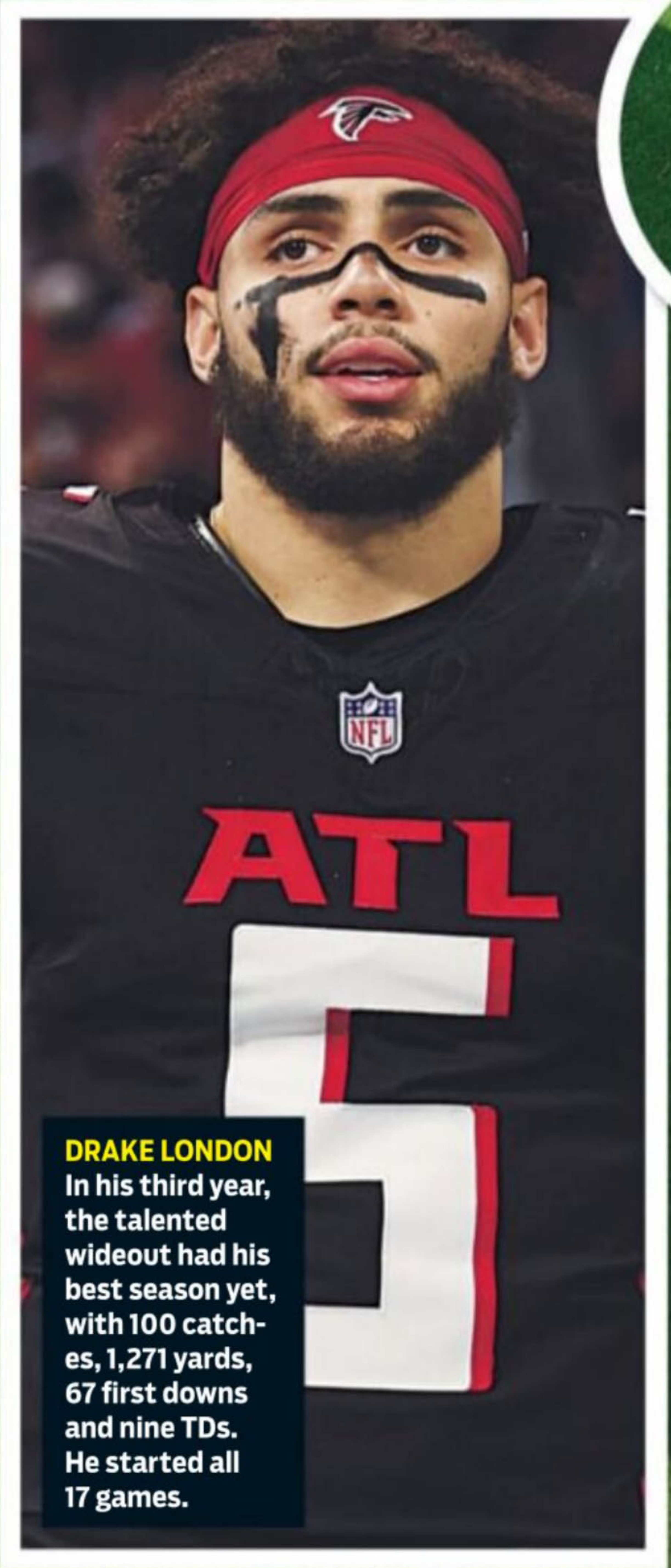
New offensive coordinator **Josh Grizzard** has big shoes to fill with the departure of last year's OC Liam Coen (now head coach in Jacksonville). As passing game coordinator last year, Grizzard isn't a new face, but he is the Bucs' fourth OC in four years. “That type of change is always hard,” Hale says. —*David Tanklefsky*

STAR SHOTS

BIJAN ROBINSON
The first RB taken in the 2023 draft was third in the league in rushing yardage in 2024.



JAKE MATTHEWS
He has started 174 games at left, now the longest active streak in the league, and he signed a two-year, $45 million extension.



DRAKE LONDON
In his third year, the talented wideout had his best season yet, with 100 catches, 1,271 yards, 67 first downs and nine TDs. He started all 17 games.

MICHAEL PENIX JR.
His drafting with the eighth pick last year was a head-scratcher for many, but the move may prove to be a great one if he shines this season.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PERRY KNOTTS/GETTY IMAGES; TODD ROSENBERG/GETTY IMAGES; KEVIN C. COX/GETTY IMAGES; PERRY KNOTTS/GETTY IMAGES

ATLANTA FALCONS

NFC SOUTH

2024 WRAP-UP

Up by two games in the division 10 weeks into the season, the Falcons were in position to win their first crown in eight years. And then...QB Kirk Cousins turned into a pumpkin, Atlanta dropped six of their last eight and the team missed the playoffs for a seventh-straight year.

2025 OUTLOOK

Cousins is still on the roster, but the 180 million-dollar man is in a supporting role behind starter Michael Penix Jr., who will look to maximize an offense with considerable weapons. Atlanta put draft capital into bolstering the D-line, which could make them true division contenders.

STATS

Head Coach
Raheem Morris
2024 Record 8–9, finished second in division, failed to qualify for playoffs
Offensive Leaders Kirk Cousins, 453 attempts, 303 completions, 3,508 yards; Bijan Robinson, 304 attempts, 1,456 yards
Defensive Leaders Kaden Elliss, 151 tackles; Jessie Bates III, 4 interceptions; Arnold Ebiketie, 6 sacks

> “The bottom sure fell out last year. That midseason losing streak—they dropped four in a row, and they weren’t respectable losses.”
>
> Jen Hale

GAINS

Along with two top draft picks, LB Jalon Walker (below) and DE James Pearce Jr., the Falcons brought in longtime DE Leonard Floyd and LB Divine Deablo. Also: DE Morgan Fox signed from the Los Angeles Chargers and safeties Xavier Watts and Billy Bowman Jr. were drafted.

LOSSES

DT Grady Jarrett, a 10-year fixture on the Falcons’ D-line, signed with the Bears. Also moving elsewhere: DT Eddie Goldman (the Commanders), LB Nate Landman (the Rams), safety Richie Grant (the 49ers) and WR/special teams player Avery Williams (the Eagles).

FROM LEFT: BROOKE SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

The Falcons are giving the keys to QB **Michael Penix Jr.** and the fate of the offense rests in his hands. “Penix has to take that next step,” says Fox NFL reporter Jen Hale. “His accuracy is going to be so key. [He’s] got to have great pocket presence, read defenses and make good decisions.”

THE PLAYMAKER

RB **Bijan Robinson** was the cornerstone of the offense last year, becoming the first Atlanta back in 16 years to rush for over 1,400 yards. Robinson will be a crucial support as Penix looks to gain experience. “A good ground game is always one of the most important safety nets for a young quarterback,” says Hale.

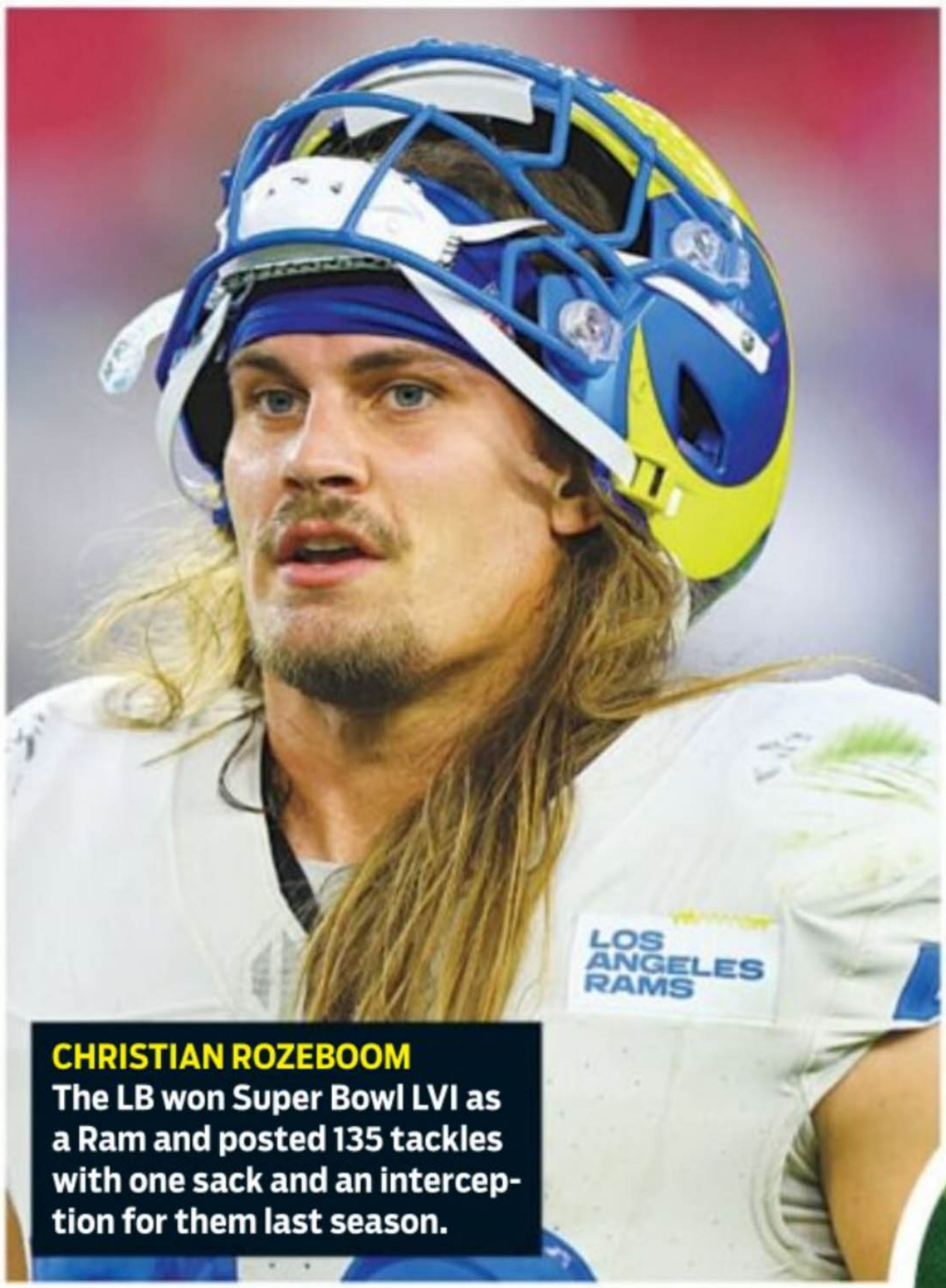
THE DRIVE STOPPERS

The Falcons drafted LB **Jalon Walker** and DE **James Pearce Jr.** in the first round to address their top need. Big things are expected from the rookies for a defense that finished in the bottom third in points and yards allowed. “There can’t be a rookie learning curve for those two,” Hale says.

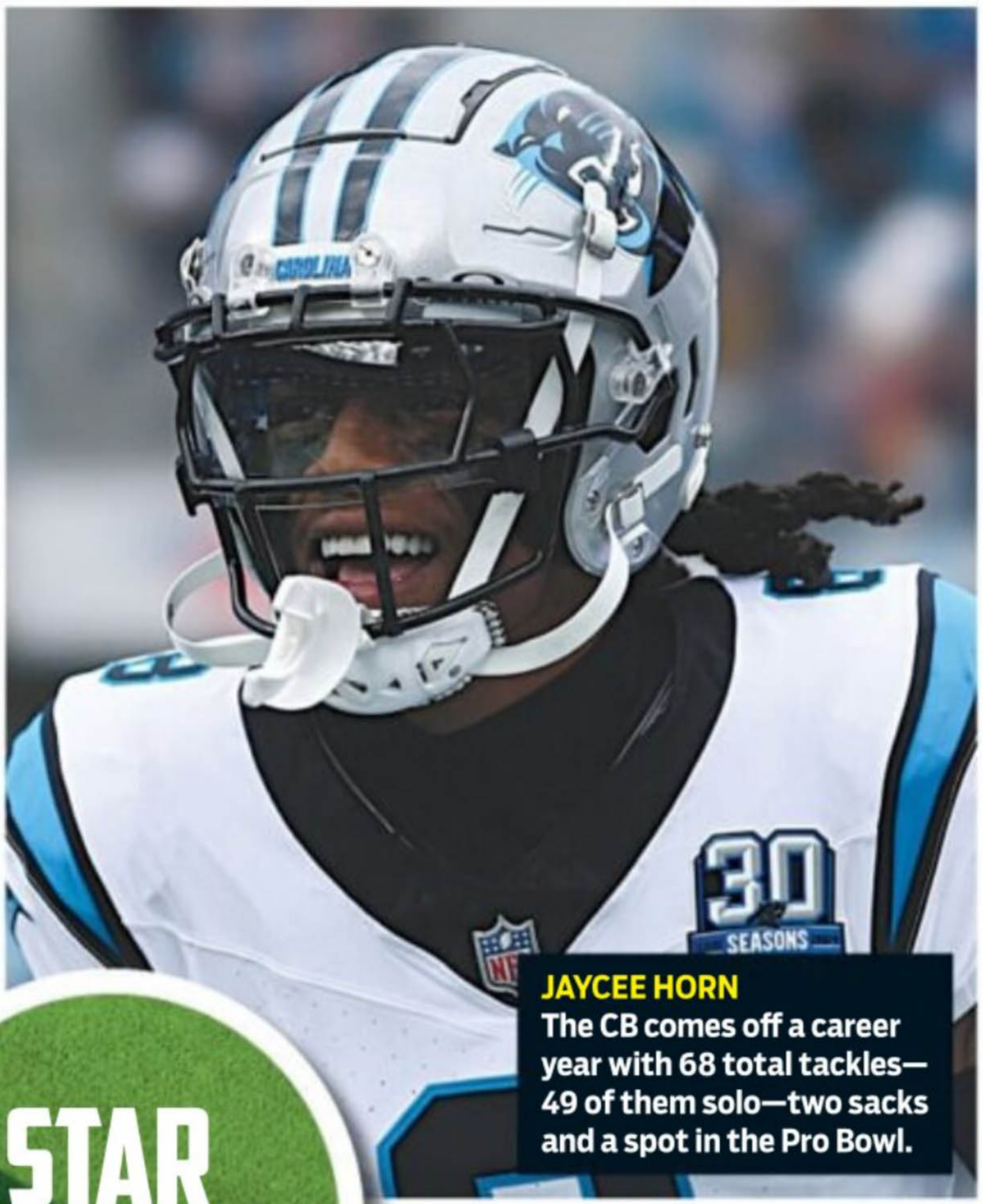
THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

It was an up-and-down year for veteran kicker **Younghoe Koo** (left), who missed a career-high nine kicks and was out the last three games with injuries. If he can find his old form, having one of the best kickers could be critical for a team with talent but small margin for error. *—DT*

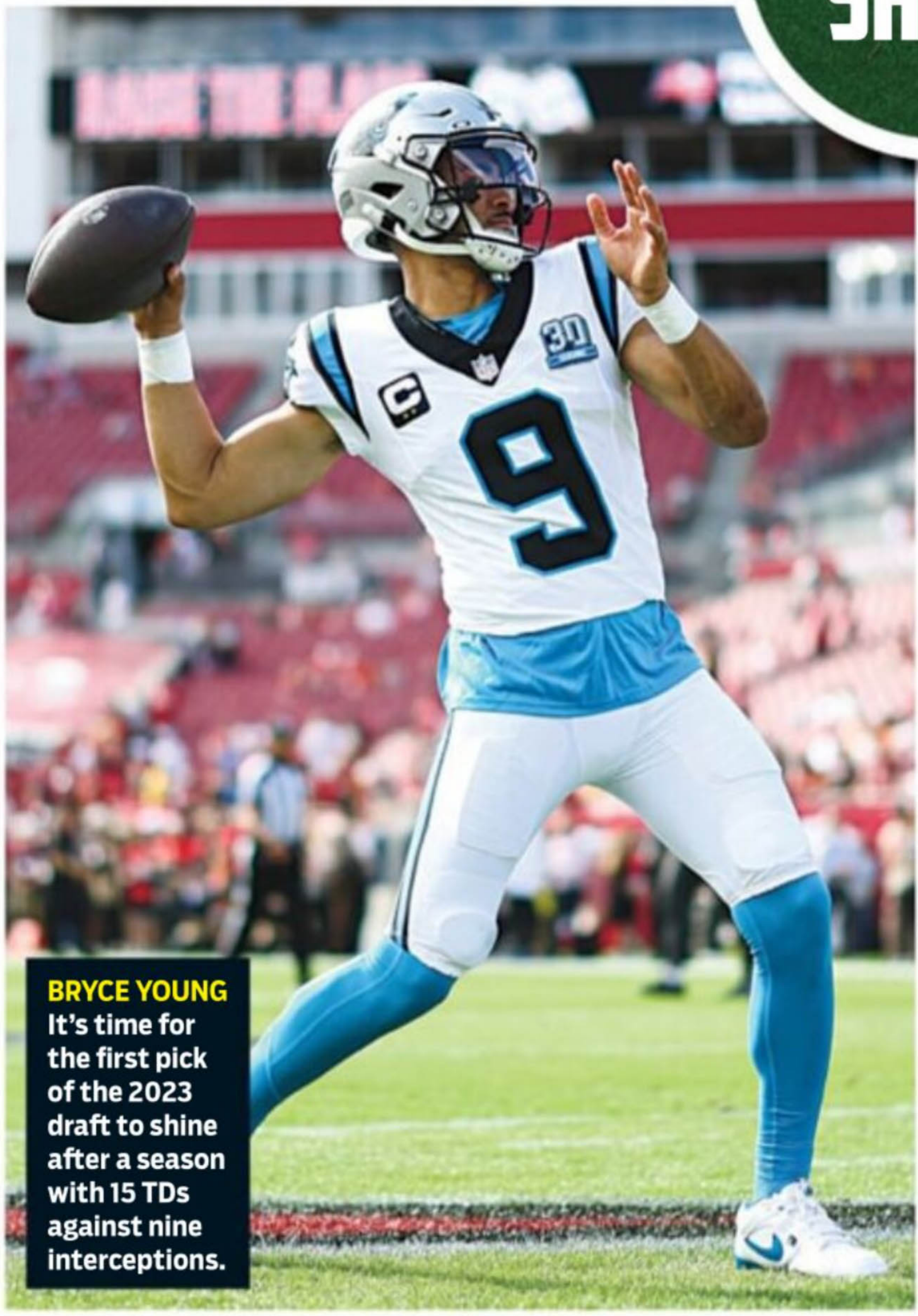
STAR SHOTS



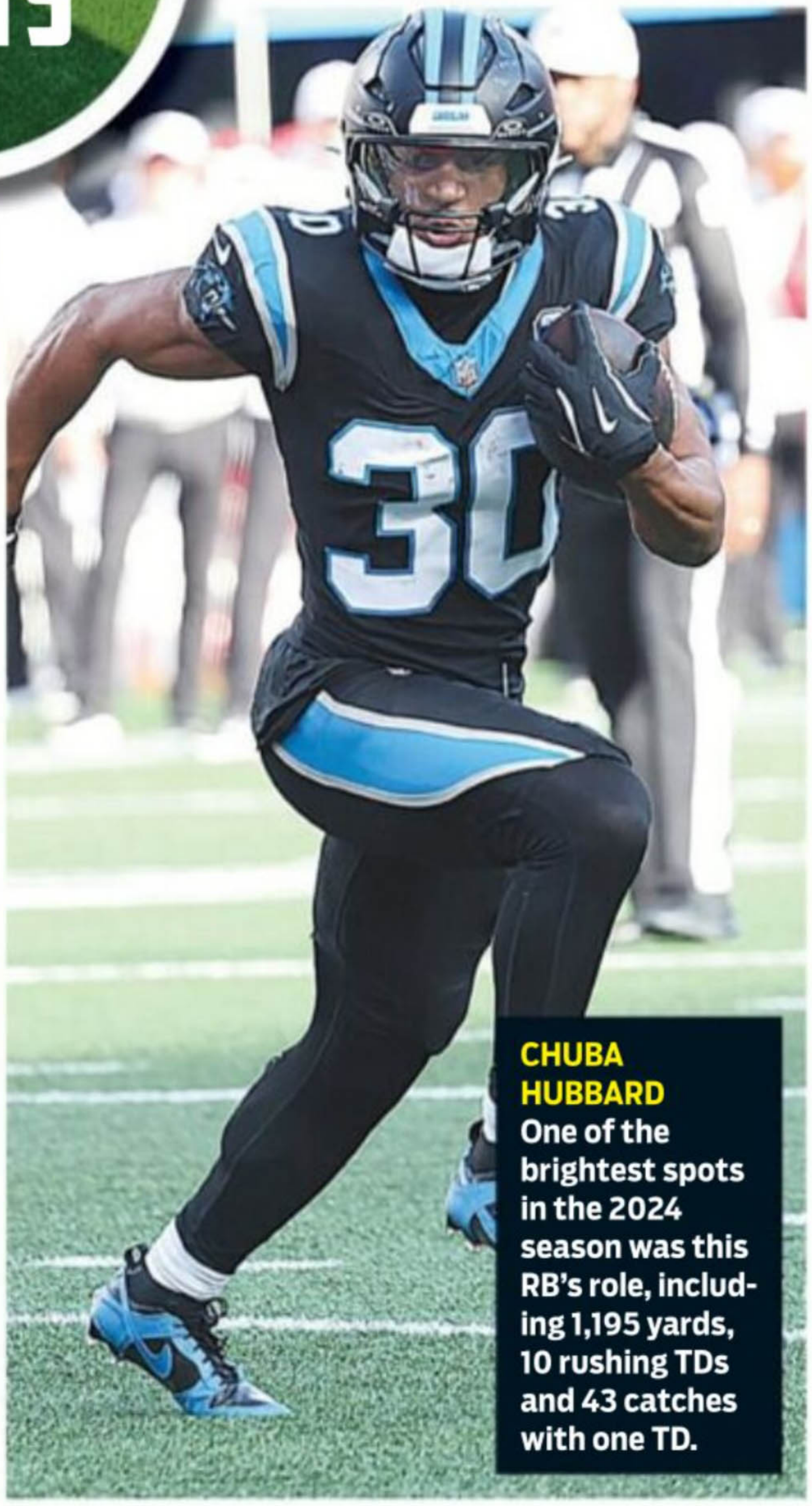
CHRISTIAN ROZEBOOM
The LB won Super Bowl LVI as a Ram and posted 135 tackles with one sack and an interception for them last season.



JAYCEE HORN
The CB comes off a career year with 68 total tackles—49 of them solo—two sacks and a spot in the Pro Bowl.



BRYCE YOUNG
It's time for the first pick of the 2023 draft to shine after a season with 15 TDs against nine interceptions.



CHUBA HUBBARD
One of the brightest spots in the 2024 season was this RB's role, including 1,195 yards, 10 rushing TDs and 43 catches with one TD.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JORDON KELLY/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES; JARED C. TILTON/GETTY IMAGES;
JOHN BYRUM/ICON SPORTSWIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES; KEVIN SABITUS/GETTY IMAGES

CAROLINA PANTHERS

NFC SOUTH

2024 WRAP-UP

The Panthers allowed 534 points, the most in a season in NFL history (granted, they did it in a 17-game season, but that still ain't pretty). They benched their starting QB after losing their first two games by a combined 60 points and yet, there were some small moments of hope.

2025 OUTLOOK

It's all about improvement, and Carolina is hoping for a big third-year rise from former first-overall pick Bryce Young at QB after he lost, then reclaimed, the starting job last year. "If you're going to be on schedule, this is where you have to make that jump," says Fox NFL reporter Jen Hale.

STATS

Head Coach
Dave Canales
2024 Record 5–12, finished third in division, failed to qualify for playoffs
Offensive Leaders Bryce Young, 384 attempts, 234 completions, 2,403 yards; Chuba Hubbard, 250 attempts, 1,195 yards
Defensive Leaders Xavier Woods, 119 tackles, 3 interceptions; A'Shawn Robinson, Jadeveon Clowney, 5.5 sacks

> "Quarterback Bryce Young's presence in the interview room—it was different. You felt like you were talking to a mature veteran now."
>
> Jen Hale

GAINS

Taking WR Tetairoa McMillan with the eighth pick in the draft was key for the Panthers. Other big adds: former Cowboys RB Rico Dowdle (below), DT Tershawn Wharton (from the Chiefs), safety Tre'von Moehrig (Raiders) and LB Christian Rozeboom (the Rams).

LOSSES

Safety Xavier Woods left for the Titans along with punter Johnny Hekker; LB Shaq Thompson, released after an injury-plagued year, signed with the Bills. RB Miles Sanders is now a Cowboy, safety Sam Franklin Jr. is now with the Broncos and TE Ian Thomas is with the Raiders.

LEFT: RON JENKINS/GETTY IMAGES.
RIGHT: SILAS WALKER/GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

QB **Bryce Young** was benched following a Week 2 loss to the Chargers but came back in Week 8 and posted a solid 88.9 rating the rest of the way, with 15 touchdowns and nine interceptions. The question he'll have to answer now is, can he translate that effort for a full season and give the Panthers some reason for offensive hope?

THE PLAYMAKER

In his breakout fourth season, former Oklahoma State RB **Chuba Hubbard** posted the fourth-most rushing yards in a season in franchise history. He'll get help from recently signed former Dallas back Rico Dowdle, coming off his own 1,000-yard rushing season.

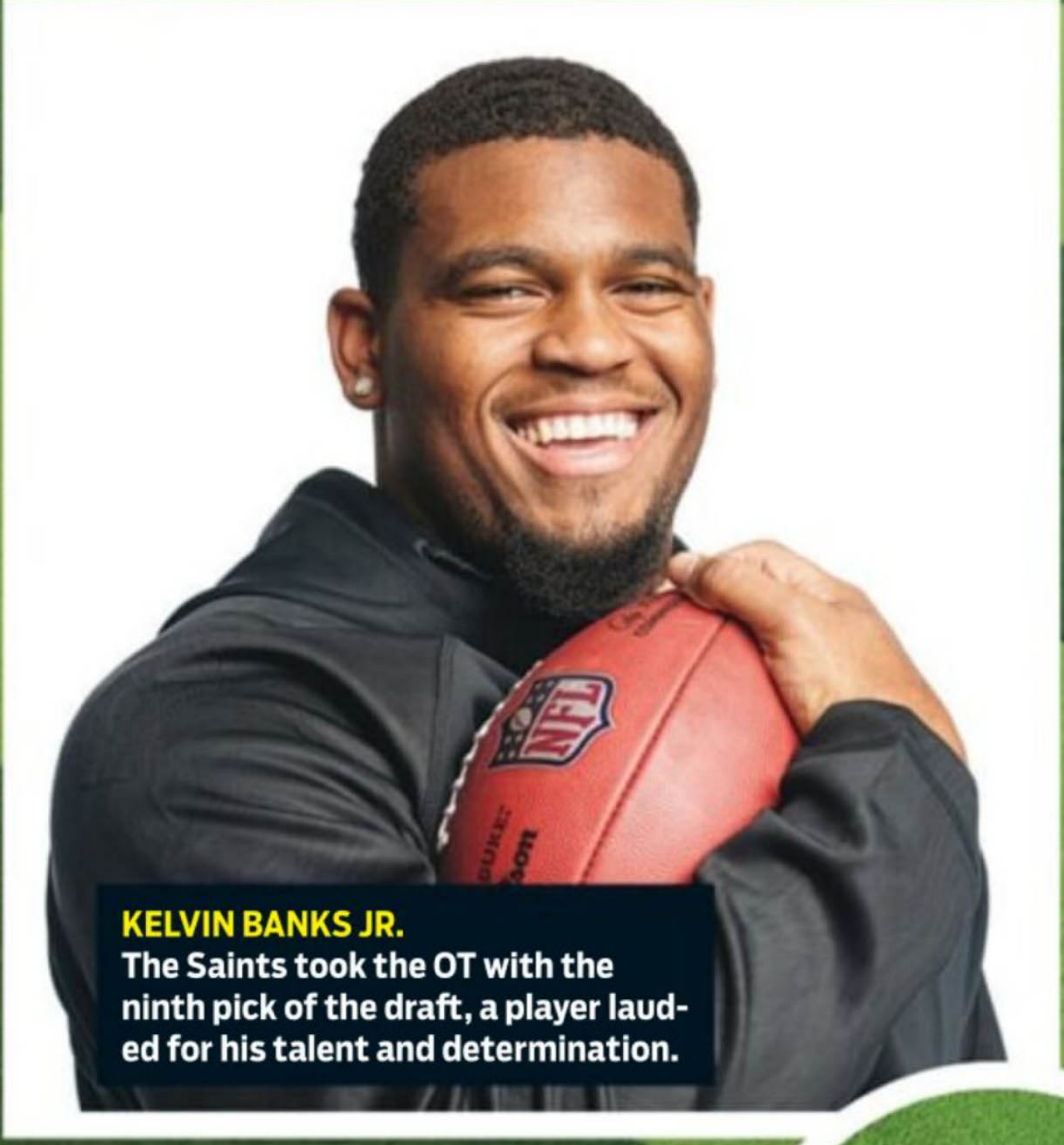
THE DRIVE STOPPER

The Panthers made CB **Jaycee Horn** the league's highest-paid defensive back with a four-year, $100 million extension. He'll anchor a secondary that's added standout safety Tre'von Moehrig on a three-year deal to try to right the ship defensively.

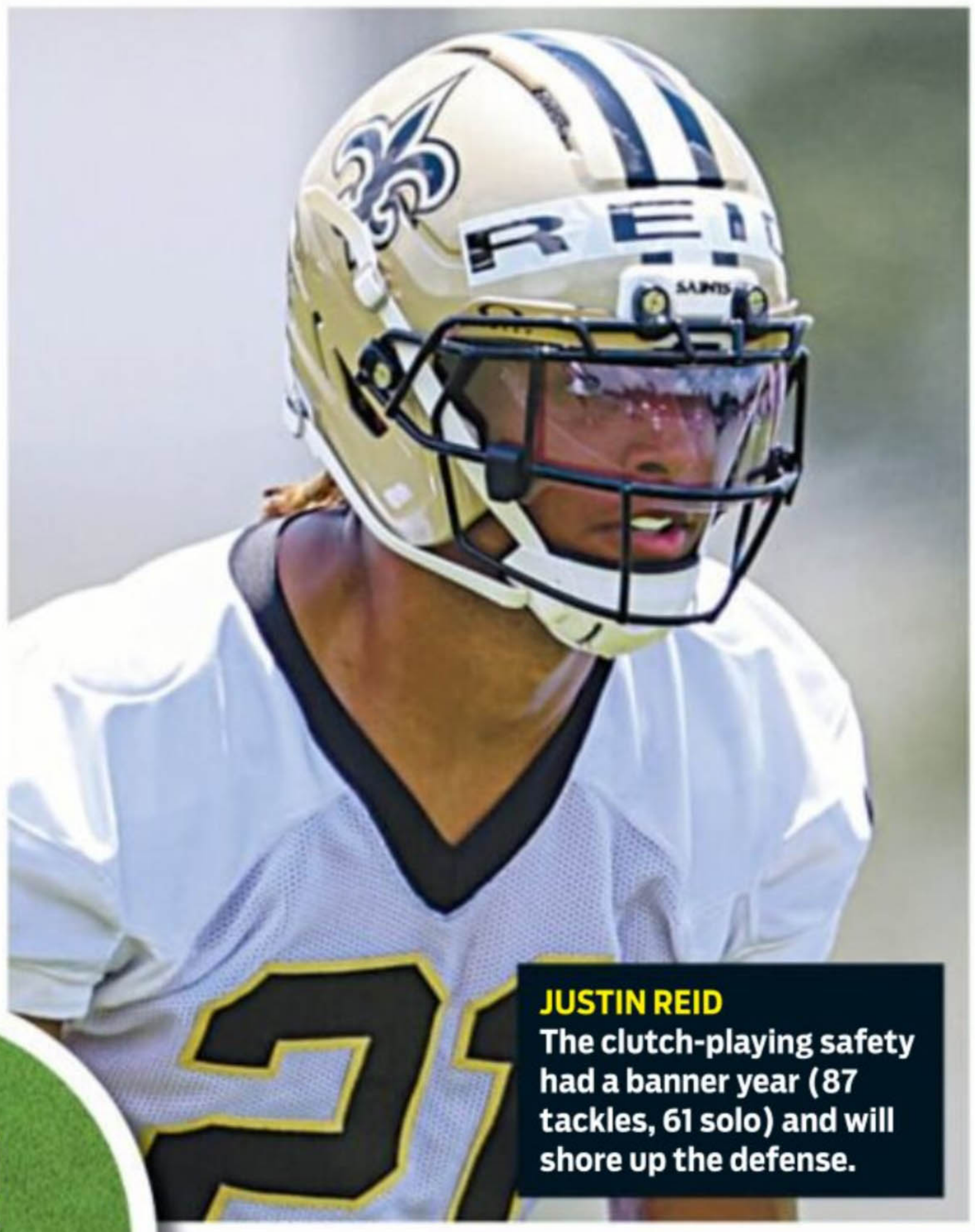
THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

New GM Dan Morgan has prioritized retooling the defense, but getting DT **Derrick Brown** (left) back healthy after he suffered a season-ending injury in Week 1 last year will be significant, especially in stopping the run, which is help that Carolina desperately needs. It's hard to imagine how different 2024 might have been with Brown on the line a year after setting an NFL record for DTs with 103 tackles. *—DT*

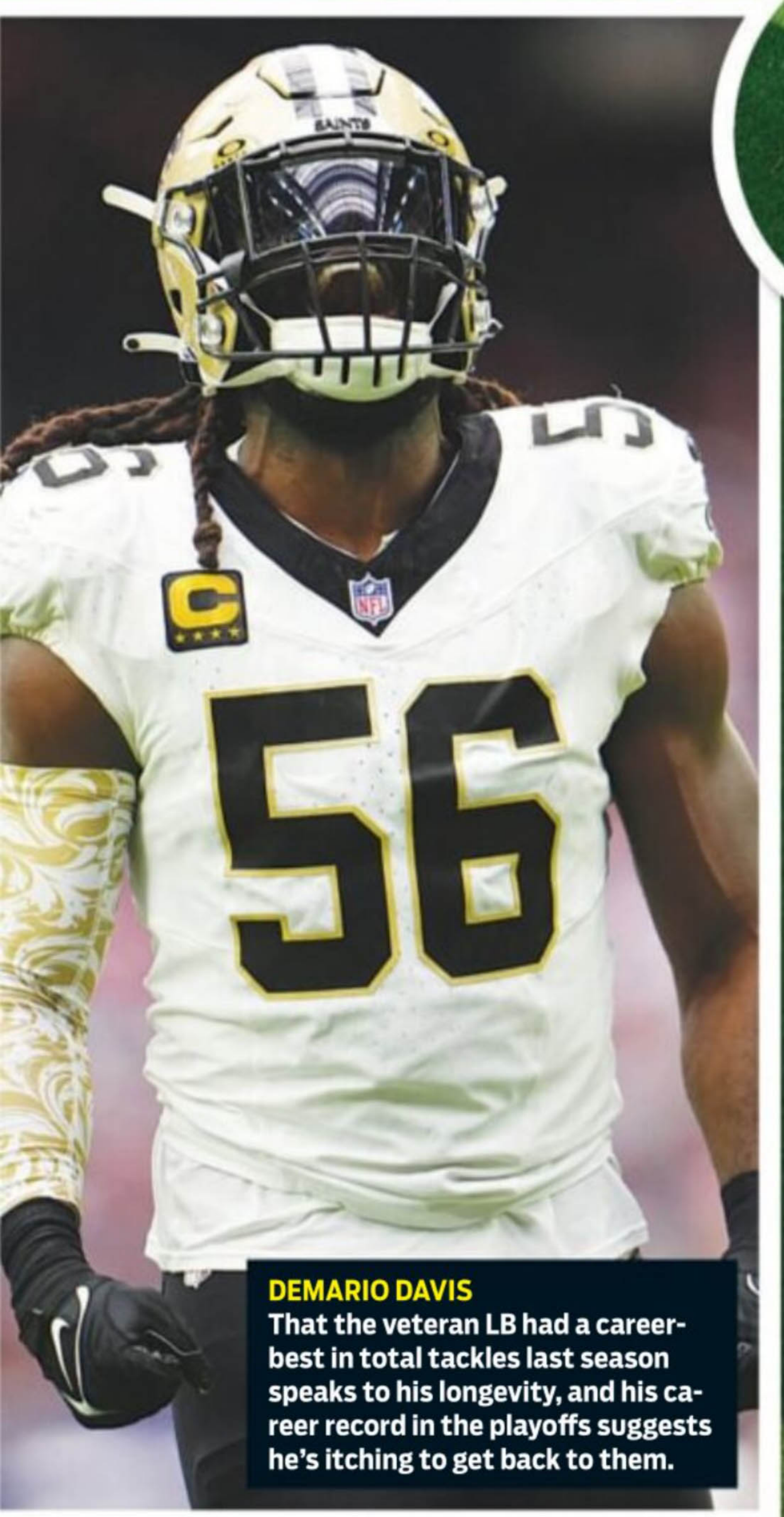
STAR SHOTS



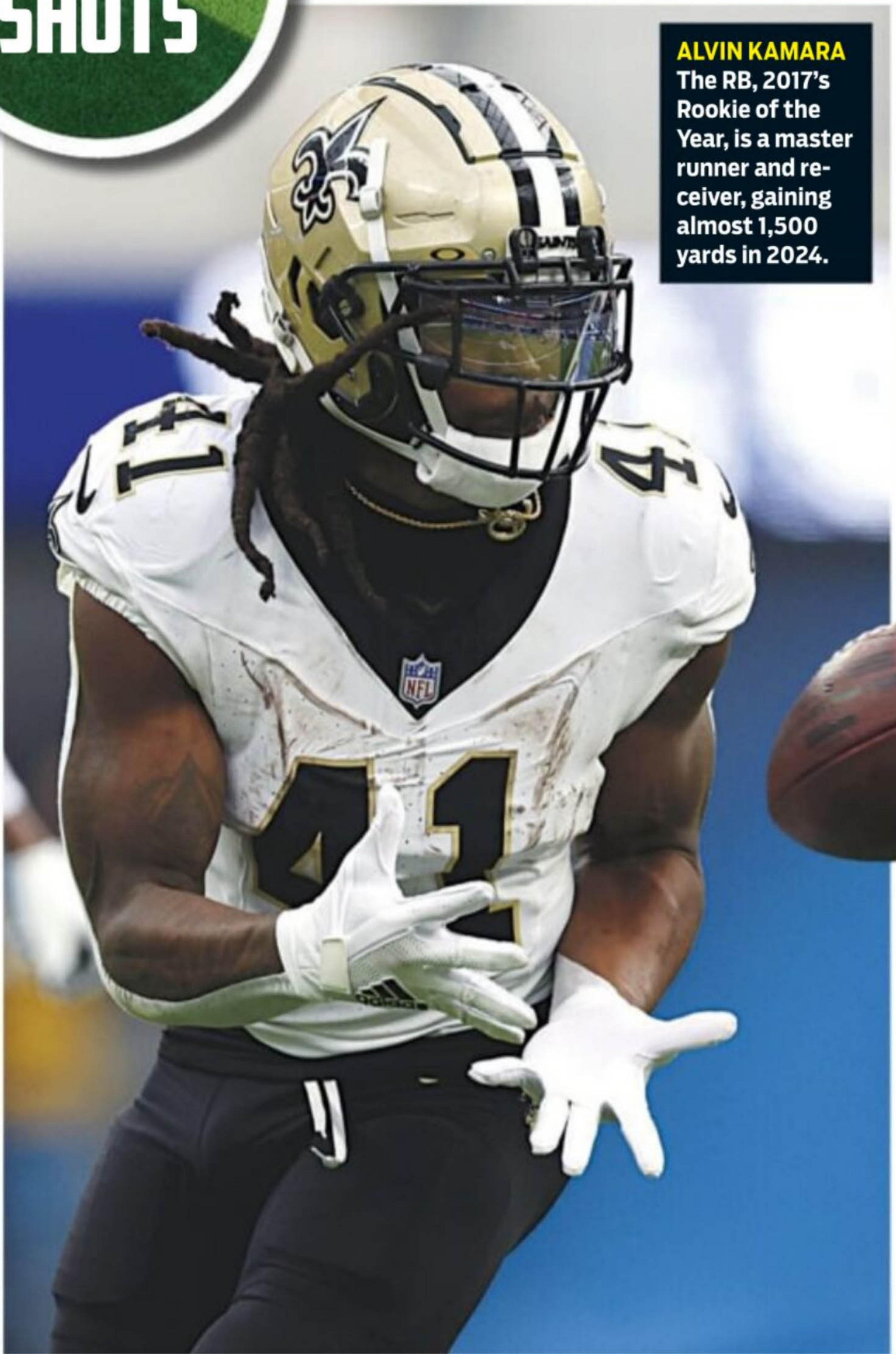
KELVIN BANKS JR.
The Saints took the OT with the ninth pick of the draft, a player lauded for his talent and determination.



JUSTIN REID
The clutch-playing safety had a banner year (87 tackles, 61 solo) and will shore up the defense.



DEMARIO DAVIS
That the veteran LB had a career-best in total tackles last season speaks to his longevity, and his career record in the playoffs suggests he's itching to get back to them.



ALVIN KAMARA
The RB, 2017's Rookie of the Year, is a master runner and receiver, gaining almost 1,500 yards in 2024.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TODD ROSENBERG/GETTY IMAGES; JONATHAN BACHMAN/GETTY IMAGES; HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES; COOPER NEILL/GETTY IMAGES

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

NFC SOUTH

2024 WRAP-UP

After lopsided wins in their first two games, New Orleans dropped seven in a row, fired coach Dennis Allen, finished last in the division for the first time since 2008 and failed to make the playoffs for the fourth year in a row. Derek Carr's two-season QB tenure ended dismally.

2025 OUTLOOK

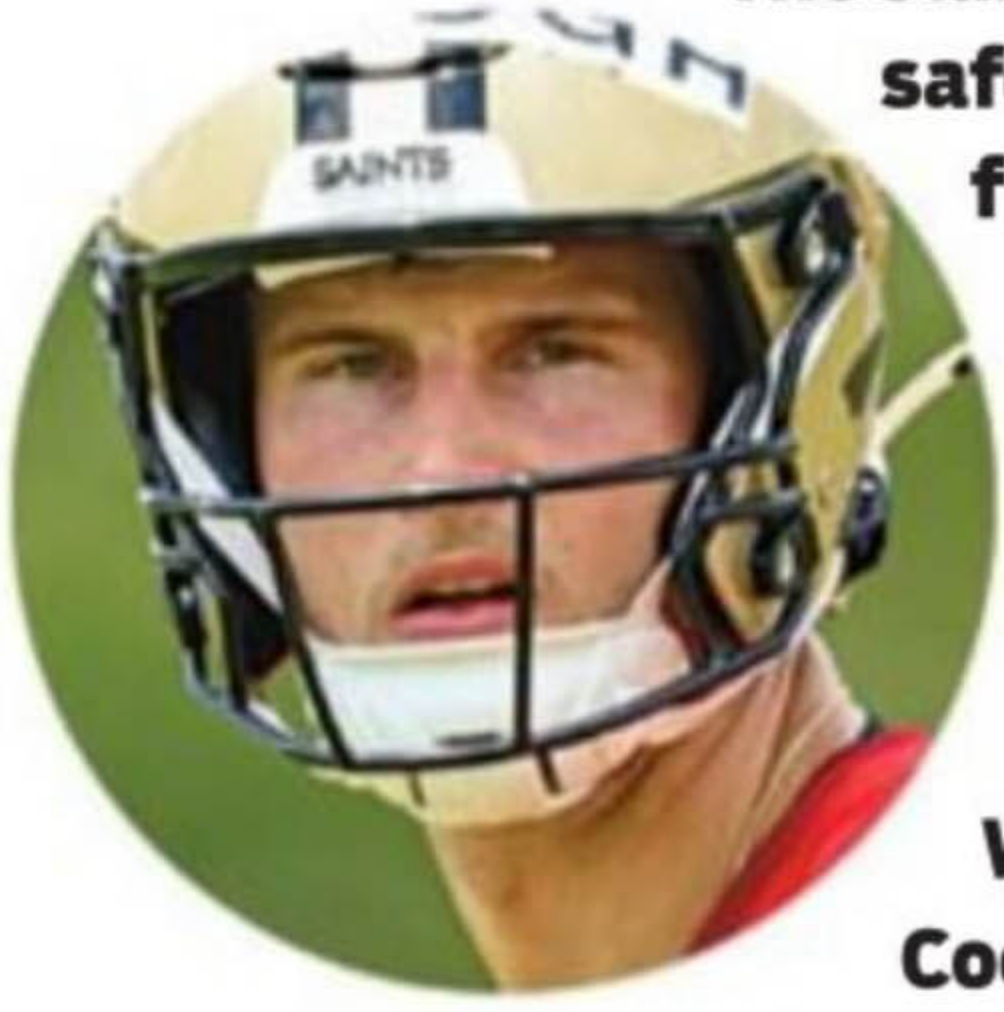
With Carr's retirement and finally some cap space, it's a new era in the Big Easy. Kellen Moore takes over a team that hasn't made the playoffs since the Sean Payton era and has serious questions at QB and—let's face it—low expectations. It's time for a once-proud team to rebuild.

STATS

Head Coach
Kellen Moore
2024 Record 5–12, finished fourth in division, did not qualify for playoffs
Offensive Leaders Derek Carr, 279 attempts, 189 completions, 2,145 yards; Alvin Kamara, 228 attempts, 950 yards
Defensive Leaders Demario Davis, 136 tackles; Tyrann Mathieu, Paulson Adebo, 3 interceptions; Bryan Bresee, 7.5 sacks

> “The New Orleans Saints have been in salary cap hell for so long… now they finally have a little bit of breathing room.”
>
> Jen Hale

GAINS



The Saints brought in safety Justin Reid from Kansas City, where he won two Super Bowl rings. They brought back WR Brandin Cooks (from Dallas) and center Will Clapp (Buffalo) for second stints with the team. There are QB hopes resting on draftee Tyler Shough (above).

LOSSES

It's way too early to assess how Derek Carr's retirement will affect the team. Other losses: WR Marquez Valdes-Scantling (signed with the Seahawks), safety Will Harris (Commanders), LB Willie Gay (Dolphins), CB Paulson Adebo (Giants) and DE Payton Turner (Cowboys).

DERICK E. HINGLE/GETTY IMAGES (2)

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

RB **Alvin Kamara** has been the backbone of the New Orleans offense for a long time. Consistent, rarely injured and always putting up numbers, Kamara will be relied on to help a new quarterback adjust under a new offensive coordinator, former Eagles quarterback coach Doug Nussmeier.

THE PLAYMAKER

How about whoever the QB is? Maybe **Tyler Shough**? Moore says it will be a competition between the 25-year-old second-round pick and backups Spencer Rattler and Jake Haener. Neither Rattler nor Haener set the world on fire backing up Carr last year, so Shough will get a good preseason look.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

LB **Demario Davis** “is the heart and soul of that defense,” says Fox NFL reporter Jen Hale. That assessment certainly didn't change last season, when the 35-year-old led the team in tackles. But he'll need help—last year's team allowed the third-most yards in franchise history.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

Head coach **Kellen Moore** (left) showed plenty of promise as an offensive coordinator—most recently for the champion Eagles—but the NFL is littered with great coordinators who couldn't win as head coaches. The challenges for Moore are significant. “He's not walking into a loaded roster,” says Hale.

—DT

LOS ANGELES RAMS

2024 WRAP-UP

After starting the season 1–4, the Rams won nine of their final 12 games to win the NFC West, then put an end to the Vikings' storybook 14–3 season with a playoff win. The following week they stuck with the eventual Super Bowl champs for most of the game, falling to the Eagles by six.

2025 OUTLOOK

With veteran QB Matthew Stafford agreeing to a reworked deal to stay with the Rams and the addition of WR Davante Adams, L.A. is hoping to compete for another playoff berth and division title. They've made the postseason six times in eight years with Sean McVay at the helm.

STATS

Head Coach
Sean McVay

2024 Record 10–7, first in division, lost to Philadelphia in divisional round

Offensive Leaders Matthew Stafford, 517 attempts, 340 completions, 3,762 yards; Kyren Williams, 316 attempts, 1,299 yards

Defensive Leaders Christian Rozeboom, 135 tackles; Jaylen McCollough, Kamren Kinchens, 4 interceptions; Braden Fiske, 8.5 sacks

> “Aaron Donald had been the guy in the middle of that defensive line so long. Then last year he's not there, but the young guys stepped up.”
>
> Jason Garrett

GAINS

Key gains for the Rams include Davante Adams, who should make an ideal complement to fellow WR Puka Nacua, and Poona Ford, a veteran DT signed from the Chargers. The team also signed ex-Bears center Coleman Shelton and drafted TE Terrance Ferguson.

LOSSES

The team decided ultimately to part ways with popular WR Cooper Kupp (above), the MVP of Super Bowl LVI, their last championship. Also gone are DT Bobby Brown III (now with the Panthers), DT Neville Gallimore (Colts), DE Michael Hoecht (Bills) and WR DeMarcus Robinson (49ers).

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

QB **Matthew Stafford**, now 37, is back for a fifth season in L.A. Stafford was solid in two playoff games, throwing four touchdowns and no interceptions. Since joining the Rams, the only NFC passer with more yards is the one he was traded for, Jared Goff.

THE PLAYMAKER

Despite a frustrating stint with the Jets, WR **Davante Adams** still earned his fifth-straight 1,000-yard receiving season and caught eight TDs in 14 games. He will hopefully fill the gap left by the much-loved but released Cooper Kupp. “Davante will help,” says NBC Sports analyst Jason Garrett. “He and Stafford will be a lethal combination.”

THE DRIVE STOPPER

The Rams used their first first-round pick since 2016 for Florida State LB **Jared Verse** in the 2024 draft, and it looks like they nailed it. Verse had 66 tackles and 4.5 sacks, topping things off by being named Defensive Rookie of the Year and earning a Pro Bowl selection.

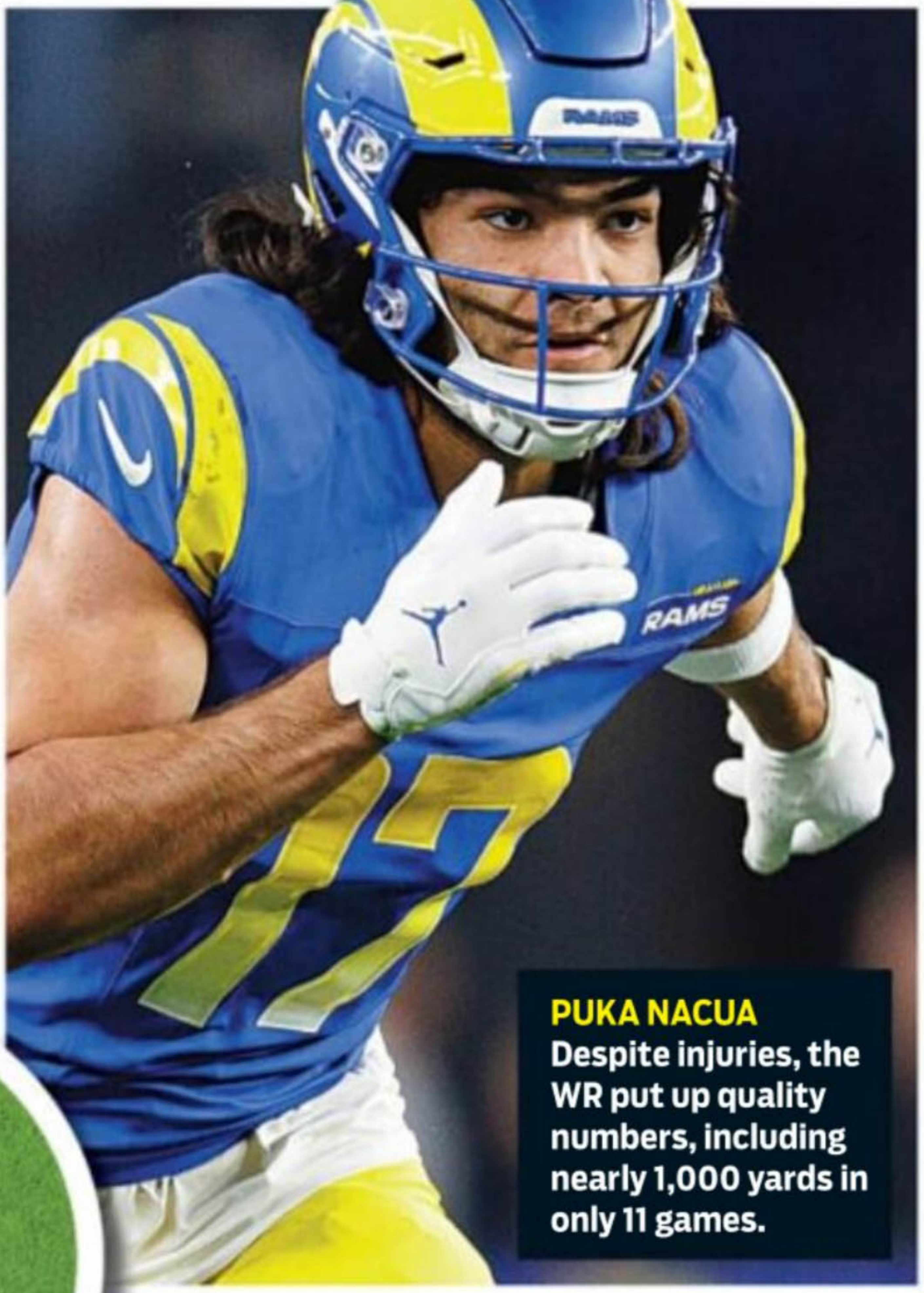
THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

RB **Kyren Williams** (left), now 25, set career highs in games, carries, yards and touchdowns last year and was one yard shy of 1,300, while also catching 34 passes. “They're at their best when they run the football,” says Garrett of the Rams. “He's going to be the guy who gets it more than anybody else.” —*David Tanklefsky*

LEFT: TODD ROSENBERG/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: THEARON W. HENDERSON/GETTY IMAGES

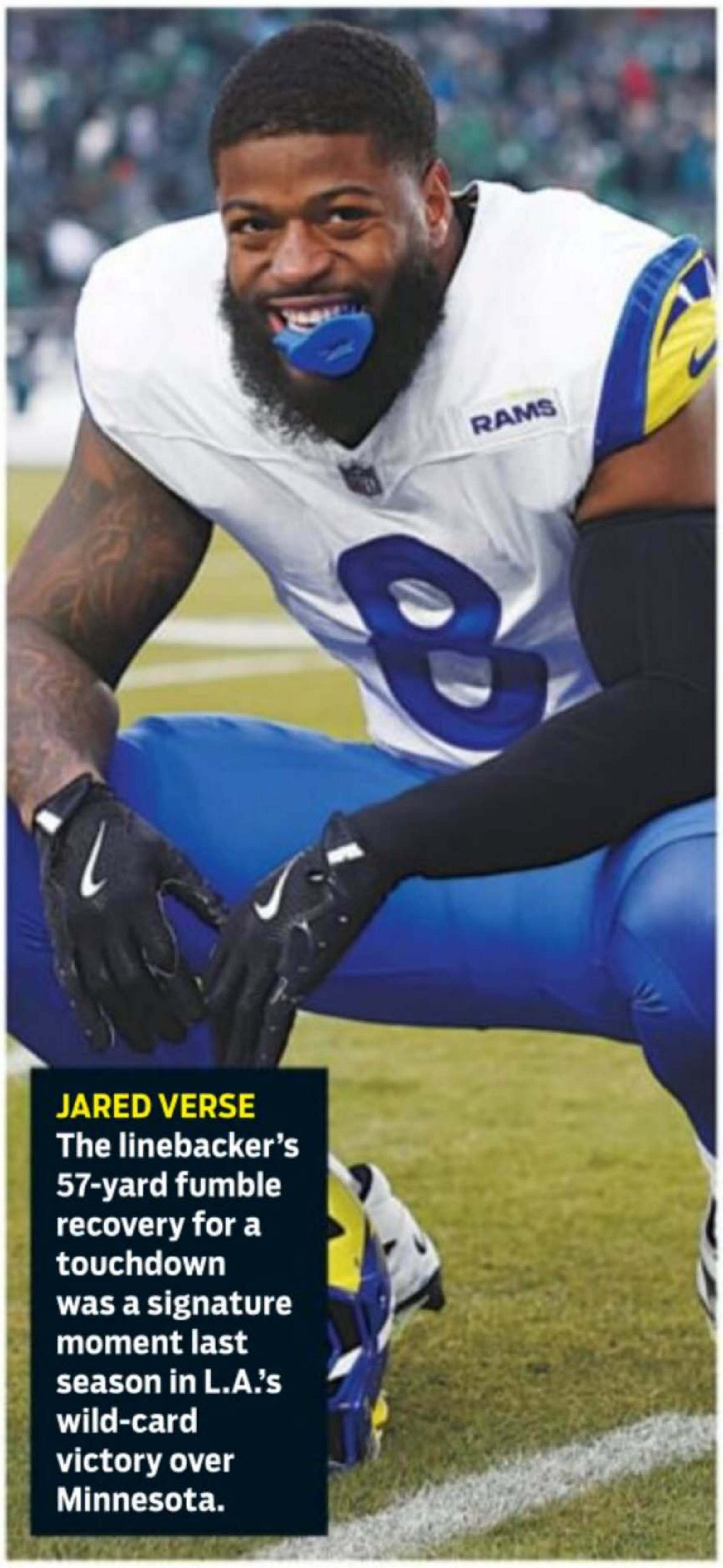
STAR SHOTS

KAMREN KINCHENS
In his first season with the club, the safety put up six pass deflections to go along with four interceptions—one of which he took back 103 yards for a touchdown.



PUKA NACUA
Despite injuries, the WR put up quality numbers, including nearly 1,000 yards in only 11 games.

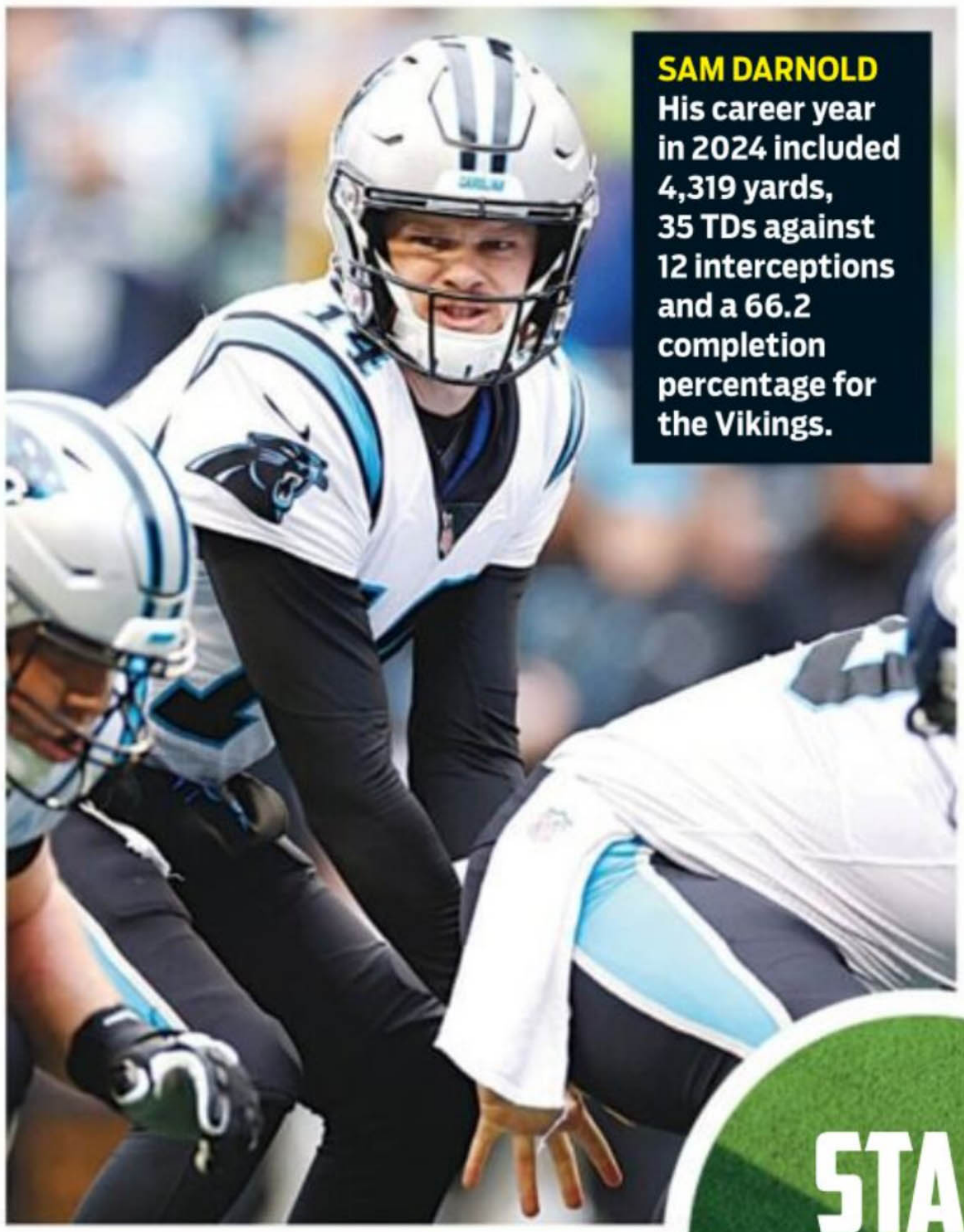
MATTHEW STAFFORD
Now entering his 17th season, the QB is 10th on the all-time list with 377 passing touchdowns. He remains a clutch performer.



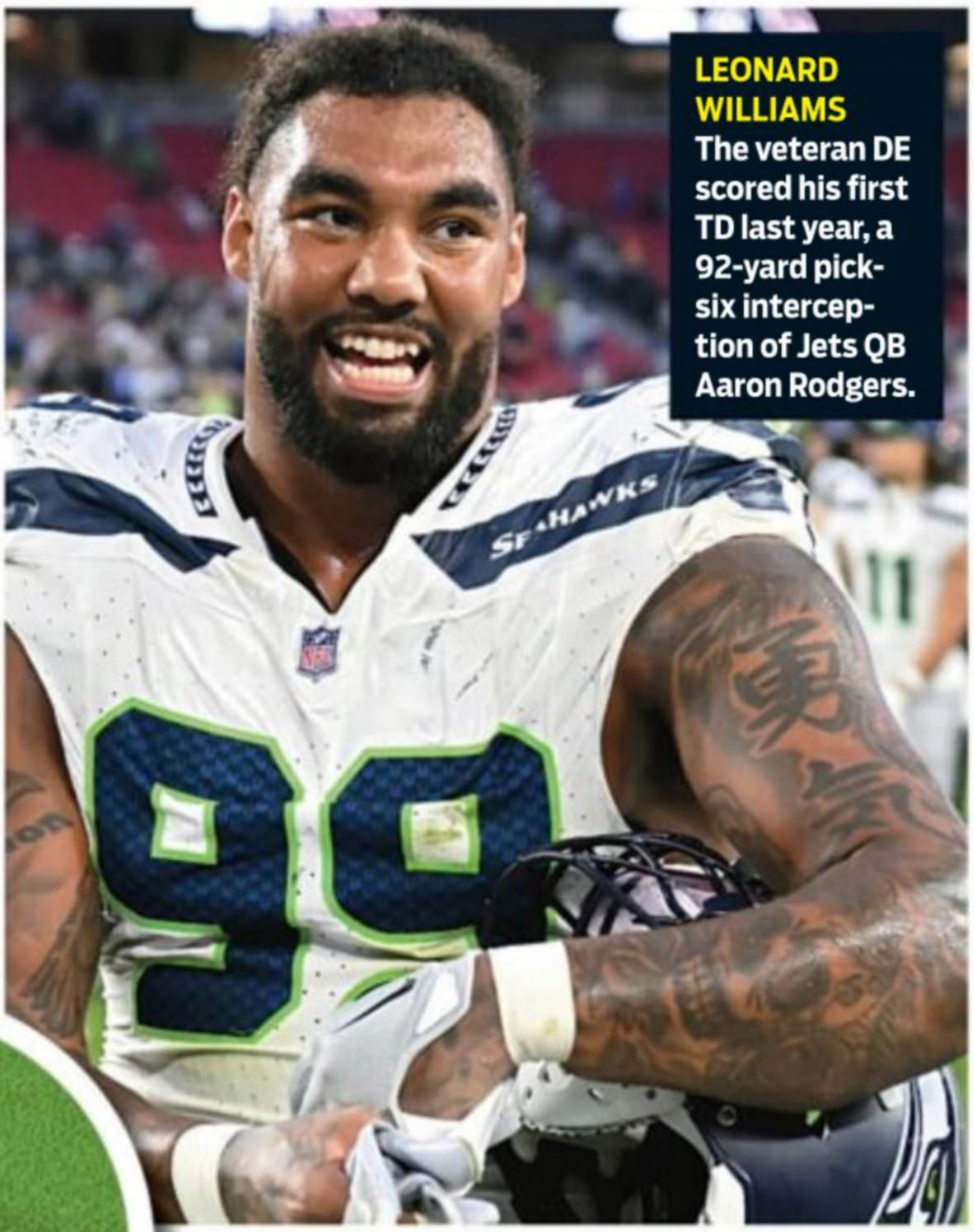
JARED VERSE
The linebacker's 57-yard fumble recovery for a touchdown was a signature moment last season in L.A.'s wild-card victory over Minnesota.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES; BROOKE SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES; SARAH STIER/GETTY IMAGES; KARA DURRETTE/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS



SAM DARNOLD
His career year in 2024 included 4,319 yards, 35 TDs against 12 interceptions and a 66.2 completion percentage for the Vikings.



LEONARD WILLIAMS
The veteran DE scored his first TD last year, a 92-yard pick-six interception of Jets QB Aaron Rodgers.

JAXON SMITH-NJIGBA
The first WR selected in the 2023 draft, he's looking to continue the success he had in his sophomore, Pro Bowl–earning season.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: STEPH CHAMBERS/GETTY IMAGES; NORM HALL/GETTY IMAGES; STEPH CHAMBERS/GETTY IMAGES

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

NFC WEST

2024 WRAP-UP

The Seahawks surprised a lot of people around the NFL last year, going 10–7 under first-year coach Mike Macdonald. But Seattle still missed the playoffs—the first time they did so in consecutive seasons since 2009—and they haven't won a playoff game in five-straight seasons.

2025 OUTLOOK

Big names moved into Seattle this year, with the 'Hawks inking QB Sam Darnold to a three-year, $100 million deal and adding free agents like WR Cooper Kupp and DE DeMarcus Lawrence. But the newcomers will have to step up, especially on the offensive side of the ball.

STATS

Head Coach Mike Macdonald
2024 Record 10–7, second in division, failed to qualify for playoffs
Offensive Leaders Geno Smith, 578 attempts, 407 completions, 4,320 yards; Kenneth Walker III, 153 attempts, 573 yards
Defensive Leaders Julian Love, 109 tackles; Love, Riq Woolen, Coby Bryant, 3 interceptions; Leonard Williams, 11 sacks

> “They want to get the running game going and get Sam Darnold in that environment, and I think they feel like he can play at a high level.”
>
> **Jason Garrett**

GAINS

Along with new QB Sam Darnold, WR Cooper Kupp (signed from the Rams) and DE DeMarcus Lawrence (from Dallas), there's WR Marquez Valdes-Scantling (Saints), first-round pick guard Grey Zabel, second-round safety Nick Emmanwori and QB Jalen Milroe (Round 3).

LOSSES

It'll be a different club with QB Geno Smith (above) traded to the Raiders and WR DK Metcalf sent to Pittsburgh. WR Tyler Lockett was released and is now a Titan, as is LB Dre'Mont Jones. OT George Fant was released, plus guard Laken Tomlinson signed with the Houston Texans.

LEFT: CHRISTOPHER MAST/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: KEVORK DJANSEZIAN/GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

The team signed QB **Sam Darnold** to be the ace of a retooled offense and take Seattle back to the playoffs. It's hard not to root for the 28-year-old journeyman—now on his fifth team in six years—coming off an improbable 14-win Cinderella season for the Vikings. “Sam has tremendous arm talent,” says NBC Sports analyst Jason Garrett.

THE PLAYMAKER

Seattle is hoping their talented 23-year-old Pro Bowl WR **Jaxon Smith-Njigba** from Ohio State keeps developing. He took a huge leap forward last year, tying a franchise record with 100 receptions.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

Seattle is hoping 33-year-old DE **DeMarcus Lawrence** (below), signed from the Cowboys, has some explosiveness left after injuries slowed him. The four-time Pro Bowler joins a strong defensive front that allowed under 22 points per game last year. Recalling their time together in Dallas, Garrett says, “He was one of those guys who played the game with so much energy.”

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

Seattle made **Klint Kubiak** their OC with the charter of focusing on building the offense around the running game, a low point for a team that finished 28th in rushing yards last year. *—DT*

ARIZONA CARDINALS

2024 WRAP-UP

The Cardinals were in sole possession of first place after Week 10 but dropped five of their last seven to miss the playoffs. While they did improve their record in coach Jonathan Gannon's second season, they faltered down the stretch, leading to a ninth-straight year without a playoff win.

2025 OUTLOOK

The Cardinals defense made some positive strides last year, and they continued to bolster it with good offseason moves. A continuing-to-improve defense coupled with a Kyler Murray/Marvin Harrison Jr.–led offense could make a splash, but they're still a work in progress.

STATS

Head Coach
Jonathan Gannon
2024 Record 8–9, finished third in division and did not qualify for the playoffs
Offensive Leaders Kyler Murray, 541 attempts, 372 completions, 3,851 yards; James Conner, 236 attempts, 1,094 yards
Defensive Leaders Budda Baker, 164 tackles; Sean Murphy-Bunting, 3 interceptions; Zaven Collins, 5 sacks

> "They're making progress. They have inconsistency, but they were concerned about their defense last year and made a real effort at it."
>
> **Jason Garrett**

GAINS

The Cards were intent on shoring up their D-line, doing so by signing DE Josh Sweat from the Eagles, drafting DT Walter Nolen (below) in the first round and signing Dalvin Tomlinson, a DT released by the Browns. Also brought in: backup QB Jacoby Brissett and drafted CB Will Johnson.

LOSSES

Offensive line coach Klayton Adams' moving to Dallas, as an offensive coordinator, won't be good for the Cards. WR Zach Pascal (Giants) and DT Naquan Jones (Chargers) also departed, along with LB Julian Okwara (Browns) and DTs Roy Lopez (Lions) and Khyiris Tonga (Patriots).

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

Kyler Murray had a nice bounce-back year after a few injury-shortened seasons, throwing for 3,851 yards. But the quarterback also had his ups and downs, going 1–4 in December, a month in which he threw more interceptions than touchdowns.

THE PLAYMAKER

Expectations were sky high for **Marvin Harrison Jr.**, famed progeny, and while he wasn't the best rookie receiver, Harrison had a solid year. His famous dad didn't have a 1,000-yard season until his fourth year, and we hear he turned out pretty good too.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

A healthy **Budda Baker** (below) was among the reasons the Cards' defense improved. The safety will be leading a group of additions via free agency and the draft, where Arizona took a defensive player with six of their seven picks.

THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

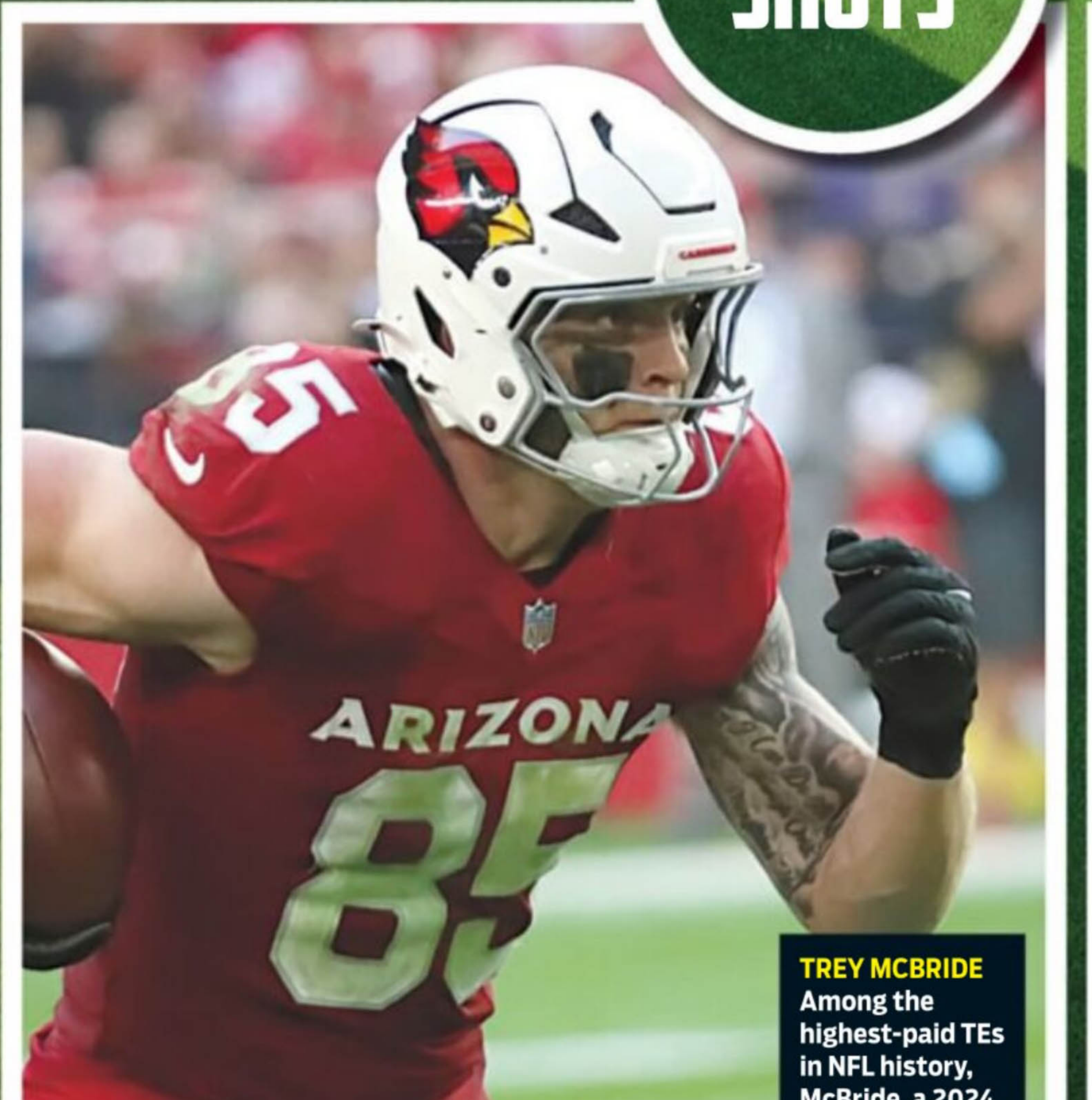
Trey McBride had the most receptions among NFC tight ends. "We had Jason Witten for years in Dallas," says NBC Sports analyst and former Cowboys head coach Jason Garrett. "Those guys make everybody's lives better." *—DT*

LEFT: TODD ROSENBERG/GETTY IMAGES. RIGHT: THEARON W. HENDERSON/GETTY IMAGES

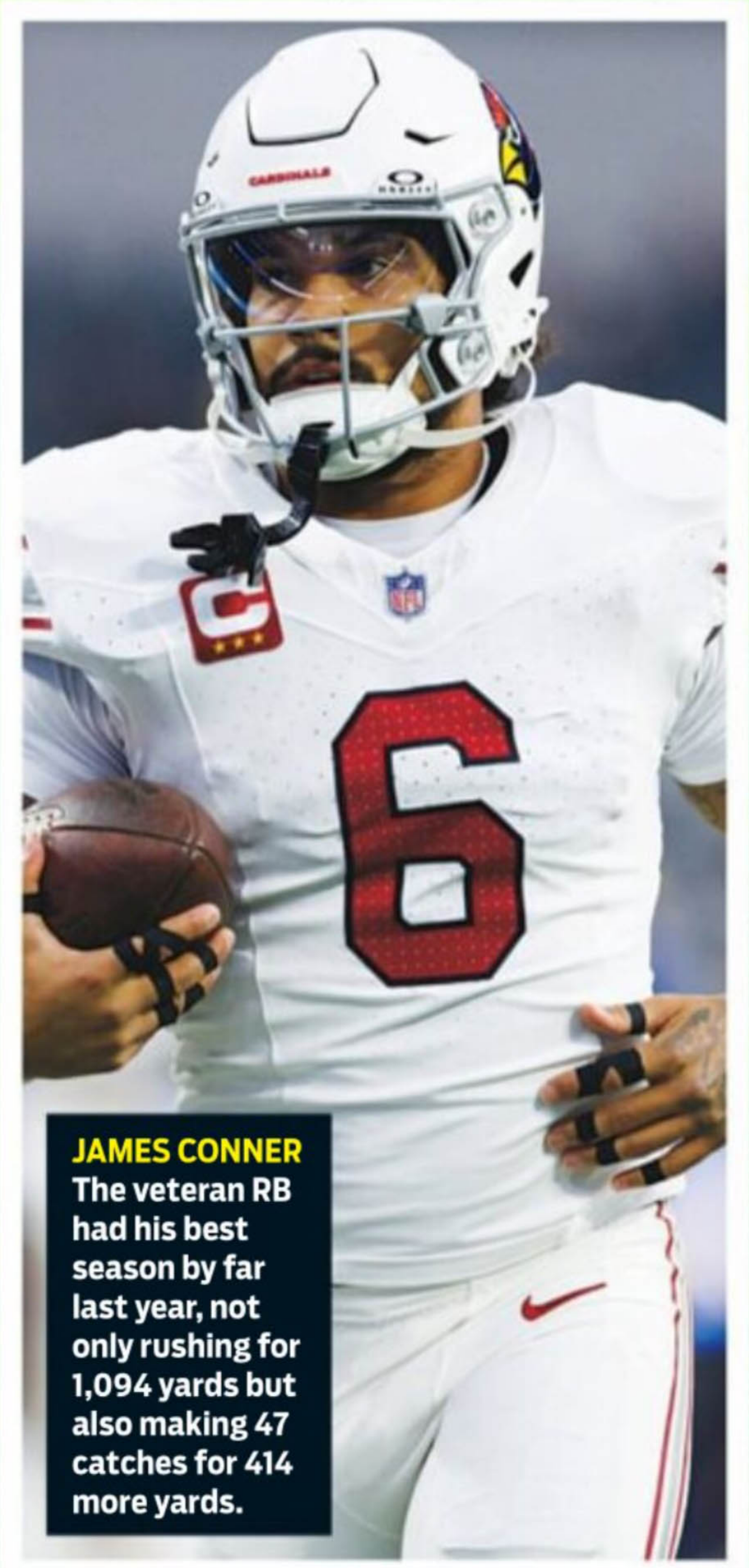
STAR SHOTS

KYLER MURRAY The QB is a hard man to bring down, and his 572 rushing yards—the second highest total in his career—speak to that talent. He also threw for 21 TDs last season.

MARVIN HARRISON JR. Perhaps a bit of a late starter last season, but he's got the genes—his fellow WR dad is in the NFL Hall of Fame.



TREY MCBRIDE Among the highest-paid TEs in NFL history, McBride, a 2024 Pro Bowler, signed a four-year, $76 million contract extension in April.

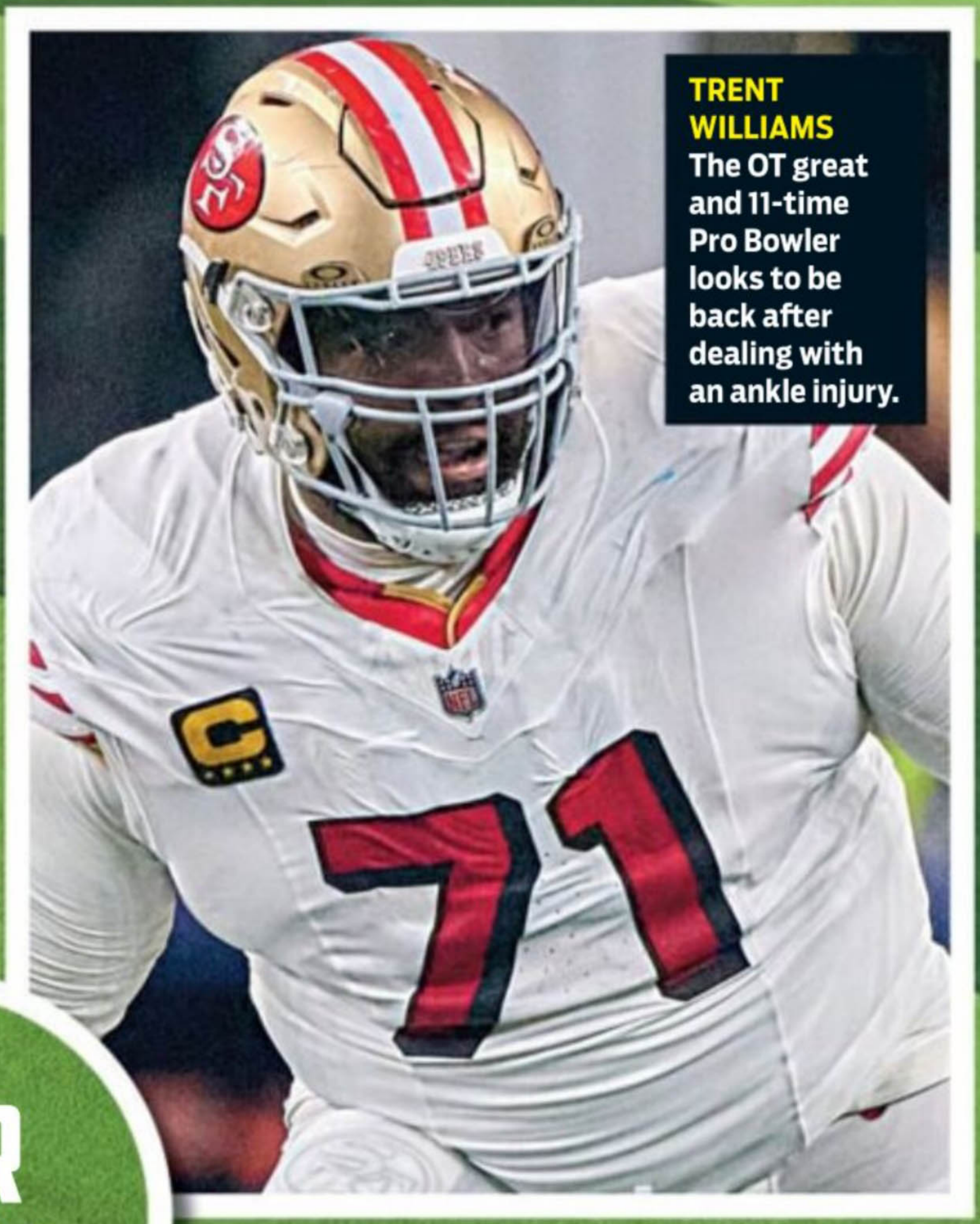


JAMES CONNER The veteran RB had his best season by far last year, not only rushing for 1,094 yards but also making 47 catches for 414 more yards.

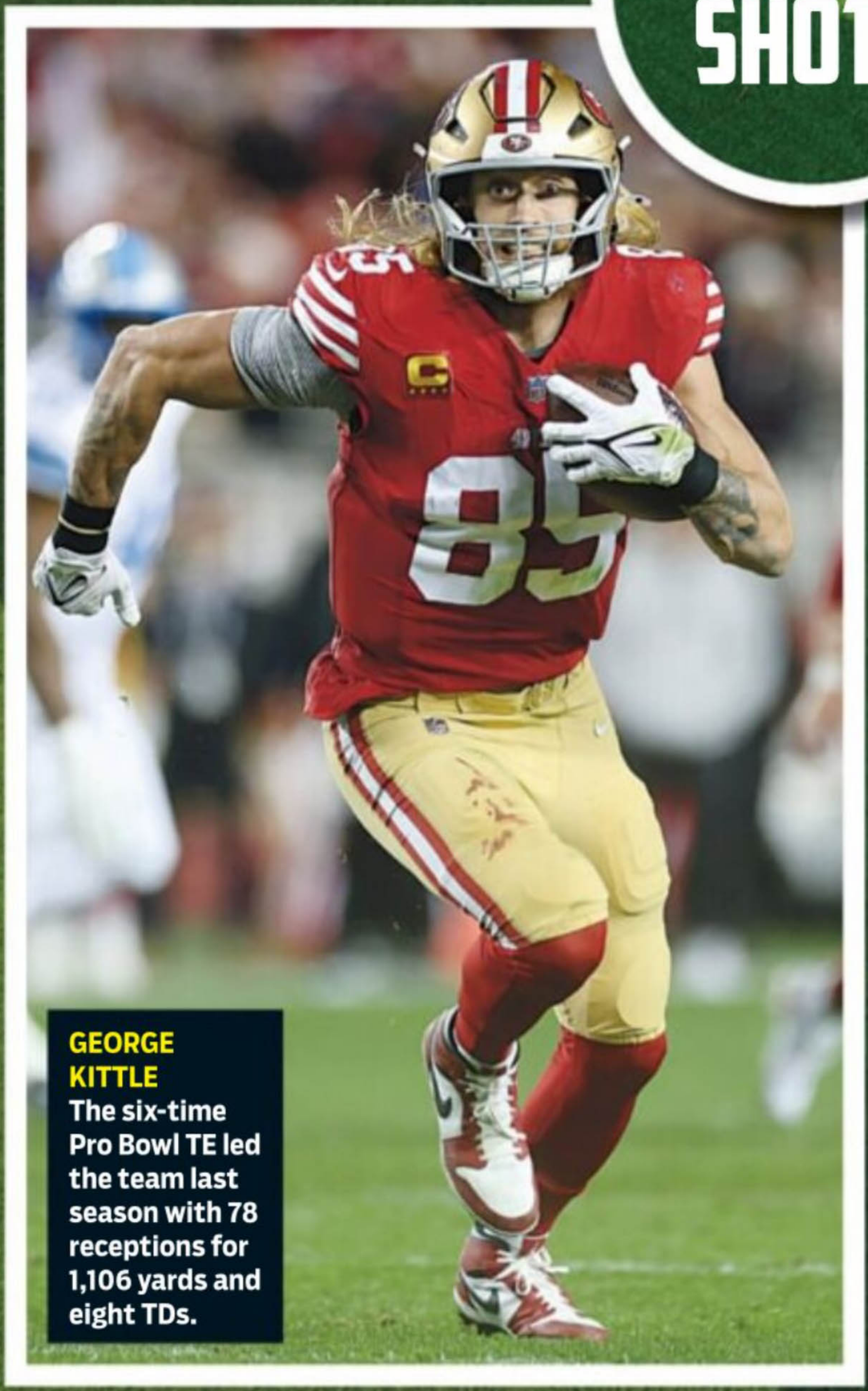
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: NORM HALL/GETTY IMAGES; CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES; RIC TAPIA/GETTY IMAGES; BRUCE YEUNG/GETTY IMAGES

STAR SHOTS

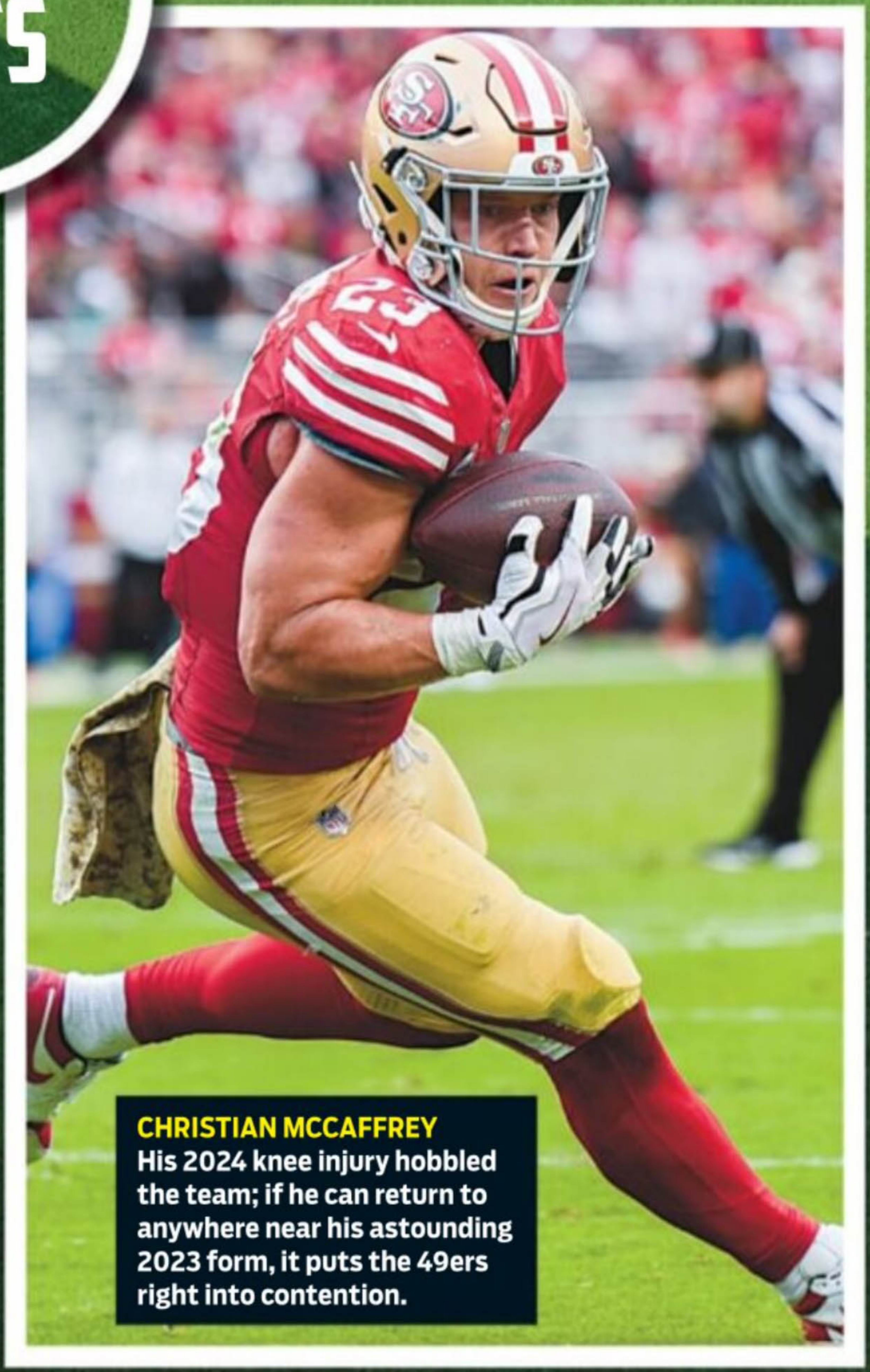
BROCK PURDY
Famously the 2022 draft's "Mr. Irrelevant," he has soared as a pro. Even in last year's frustrating season, he rushed for 323 yards.



TRENT WILLIAMS
The OT great and 11-time Pro Bowler looks to be back after dealing with an ankle injury.



GEORGE KITTLE
The six-time Pro Bowl TE led the team last season with 78 receptions for 1,106 yards and eight TDs.



CHRISTIAN MCCAFFREY
His 2024 knee injury hobbled the team; if he can return to anywhere near his astounding 2023 form, it puts the 49ers right into contention.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MICHAEL ZAGARIS/SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS/GETTY IMAGES; ROBIN ALAM/ISI PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES; THEARON W. HENDERSON/GETTY IMAGES; EZRA SHAW/GETTY IMAGES

SAN FRANCIISCO 49ERS

NFC WEST

2024 WRAP-UP

There's no way around it: It was the year from hell for a team that was expected to compete for a Super Bowl. Injuries to stars and a defense that went from third in points-allowed to 29th were major factors in San Fran losing seven of their last eight and missing the playoffs.

2025 OUTLOOK

After a hapless stint as Jets head coach, Robert Saleh returns as Niners defensive coordinator, where he'll look to stabilize a defense that allowed nearly 140 more points than in 2023. A retooled defense plus a healthy year of WR Christian McCaffrey may put them back in contention.

STATS

Head Coach
Kyle Shanahan

2024 Record 6–11, fourth in division, failed to qualify for playoffs

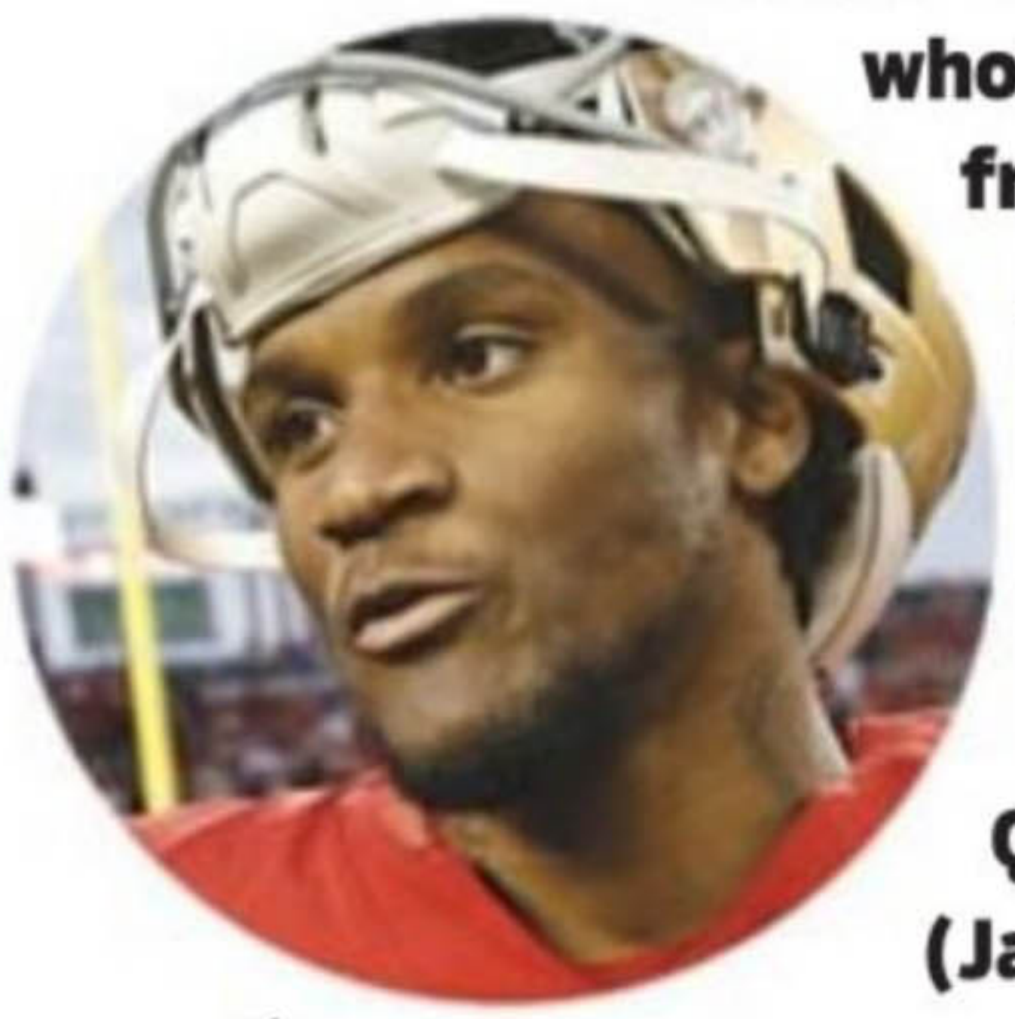
Offensive Leaders Brock Purdy, 455 attempts, 300 completions, 3,864 yards; Jordan Mason, 153 attempts, 789 yards

Defensive Leaders Fred Warner, 131 tackles; Warner, Deommodore Lenoir, 2 interceptions; Nick Bosa, 9 sacks

> "When they're all healthy, the San Francisco 49ers become a team that's certainly a threat to win that division again."
>
> Jason Garrett

GAINS

The 49ers drafted DE Mykel Williams (first round) and DT Alfred Collins (second) to help shore up defense. The team's free agent signings include TE Luke Farrell, who comes over from the Jaguars, safety Richie Grant (Falcons) and backup QB Mac Jones (Jacksonville).



LOSSES

The team lost some big names, including always-clutch WR Deebo Samuel (traded to the Commanders), CB Charvarius Ward (above, signed with the Colts) and top LB Dre Greenlaw (signed with the Broncos). Also: guard Aaron Banks (Packers) and safety Talanoa Hufanga (Broncos).

LEFT: MICHAEL ZAGARIS/SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS/GETTY IMAGES.
RIGHT: BROOKE SUTTON/GETTY IMAGES

2025: ONES TO WATCH

>> Assessment from the experts

THE ACE

SF made it clear QB **Brock Purdy** is the man going forward, signing him to a five-year, $265 million deal. "Talk about a guy who's embraced his opportunity," says NBC Sports analyst Jason Garrett. "He's done such an amazing job. When they get healthy around him, he'll be even better."

THE PLAYMAKER

The Niners are counting on WR **Christian McCaffrey** returning to his 2023 form, when he was named NFL Offensive Player of the Year and became the first player to have at least 75 rushing and receiving yards in a Super Bowl.

THE DRIVE STOPPER

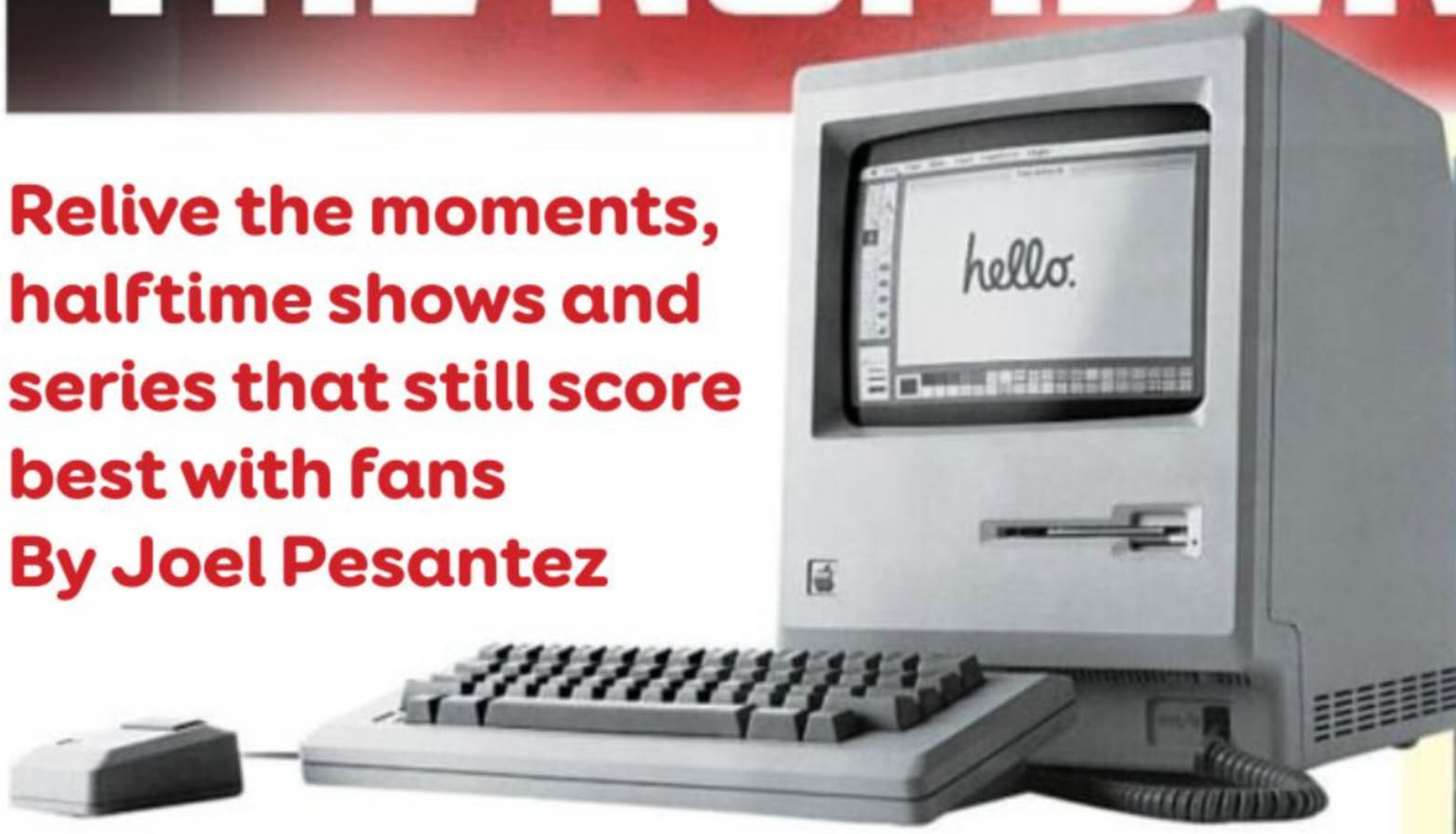
The Niners made sure **Fred Warner** (left) will be the cornerstone of their defense, inking him to a three-year deal that made him the highest-paid linebacker in football. "On the defensive side," says Garrett, "it starts with their captain in the middle."

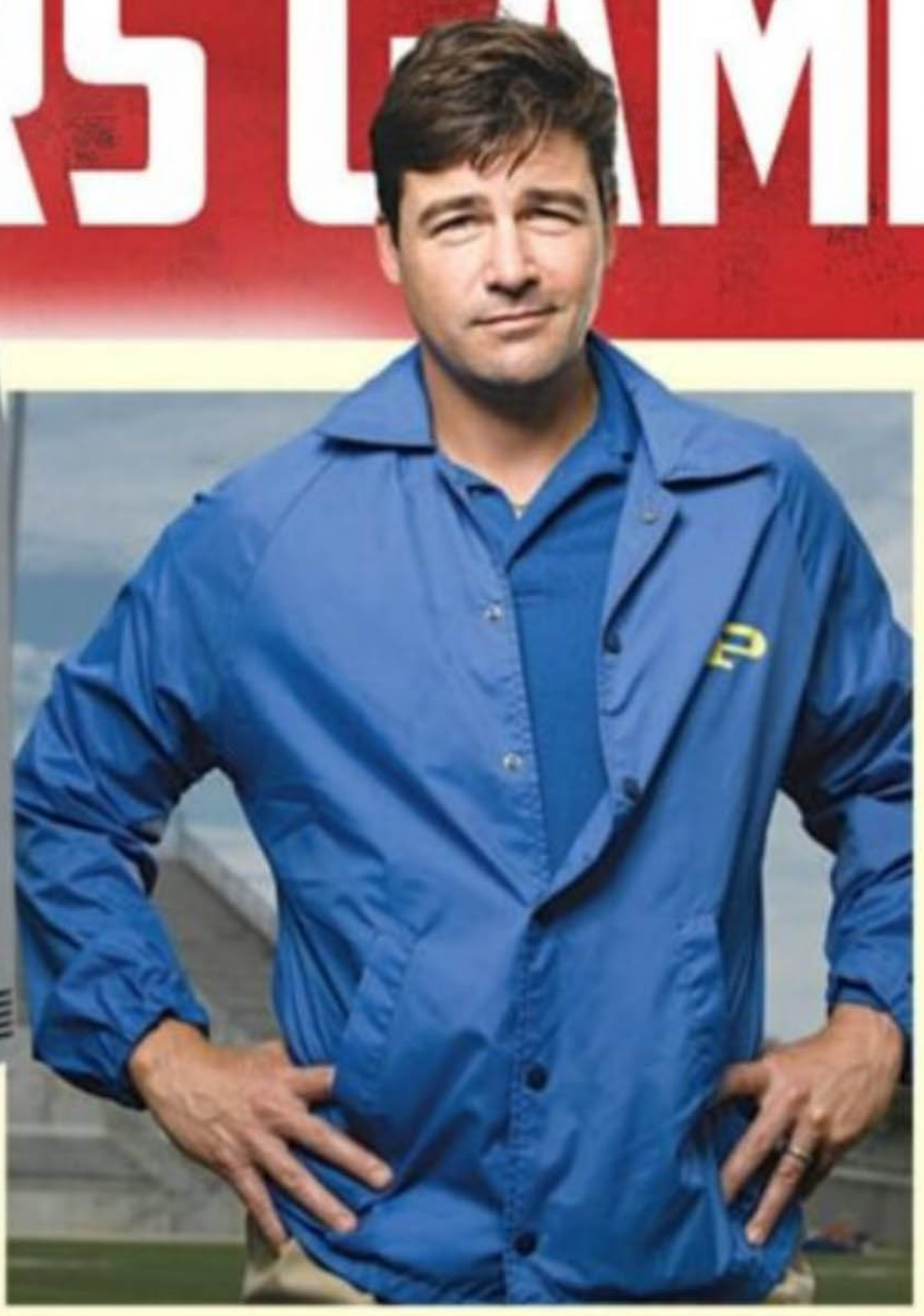
THE DIFFERENCE MAKER

Defensive coordinator **Robert Saleh** tries to steady a squad that lost LB Dre Greenlaw and Charvarius Ward but brought in solid newcomers. "The DNA of that defense is coming off the ball and getting after the quarterback," says Garrett. "I think Saleh will have a big role in making that happen." *—DT*

TV AND FOOTBALL

THE NUMBERS GAME





Relive the moments, halftime shows and series that still score best with fans

By Joel Pesantez

From the first televised game on NBC in 1939 between the Philadelphia Eagles and the now-defunct Brooklyn Dodgers, football fans have devoted time to huddling around the TV. Now, 86 years later, networks and streamers devote prime time most days of the week to the NFL during the season. Such viewership brings an outsize influence on popular culture. While the game is at the heart of it, football's presence off the grid can't be ignored. With that in mind, here are the series, moments and events that have captured us most.

Best Super Bowl Commercials

1 **"1984"** ***(Apple, 1984)***
Ridley Scott introduced the Macintosh (above) as a bold answer to dystopian reality.

2 **"Terry Tate: Office Linebacker"** ***(Reebok, 2003)***
Fictional football star Terry Tate made forgetting a cover sheet on your TPS report absolutely unthinkable.

3 **"Where's the Beef?"** ***(Wendy's, 1984)***
This spot raised our standards for patties, became a presidential campaign slogan and immortalized a three-word phrase.

4 **"Hey, Kid, Catch!"** ***(Coca-Cola, 1980)***
A cold bottle of Coca-Cola melted even "Mean" Joe Greene's tough exterior.

5 **"You're Not You When You're Hungry"** ***(Snickers, 2010)***
Betty White and Snickers reminded us how different we are when we're hangry.

Best Football-Related TV Shows Ever

1 ***Friday Night Lights (2006–11)***
For five seasons, America cheered for this drama about a Texas high school team, starring Kyle Chandler(above) .

2 ***Coach (1989–97)***
In the popular sitcom, Coach Fox (Craig T. Nelson) led with heart, and we followed all the way until he turned pro.

3 ***Hard Knocks (2001–present)***
For 25 seasons, this NFL docuseries has given fans access to their favorite teams and locker room tales to root for.

4 ***The League (2009–15)***
A ruthlessly hilarious fantasy football comedy, it had friends playing to win—and not earn dreaded "Sacko Punishments."

5 ***All American (2018–present)***
The real-life story of LB Spencer Paysinger fuels this gritty teen drama and sleeper hit about high school recruiting.

FROM LEFT: APIC/GETTY IMAGES; MICHAEL MULLER/NBCU PHOTO BANK/NBCUNIVERSAL VIA GETTY IMAGES VIA GETTY IMAGES;
AP PHOTO/HARRY CABLUCK, FILE; THEO WARGO/GETTY IMAGES; CHUCK FADELY/MIAMI HERALD/TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE VIA GETTY IMAGES

Most Astonishing TV–Football Moments

1 The Immaculate Reception *(1972)*
A magical deflection. A controversial catch. Gobsmacked announcers. And Franco Harris (above) pulled the Steelers into the Super Bowl.

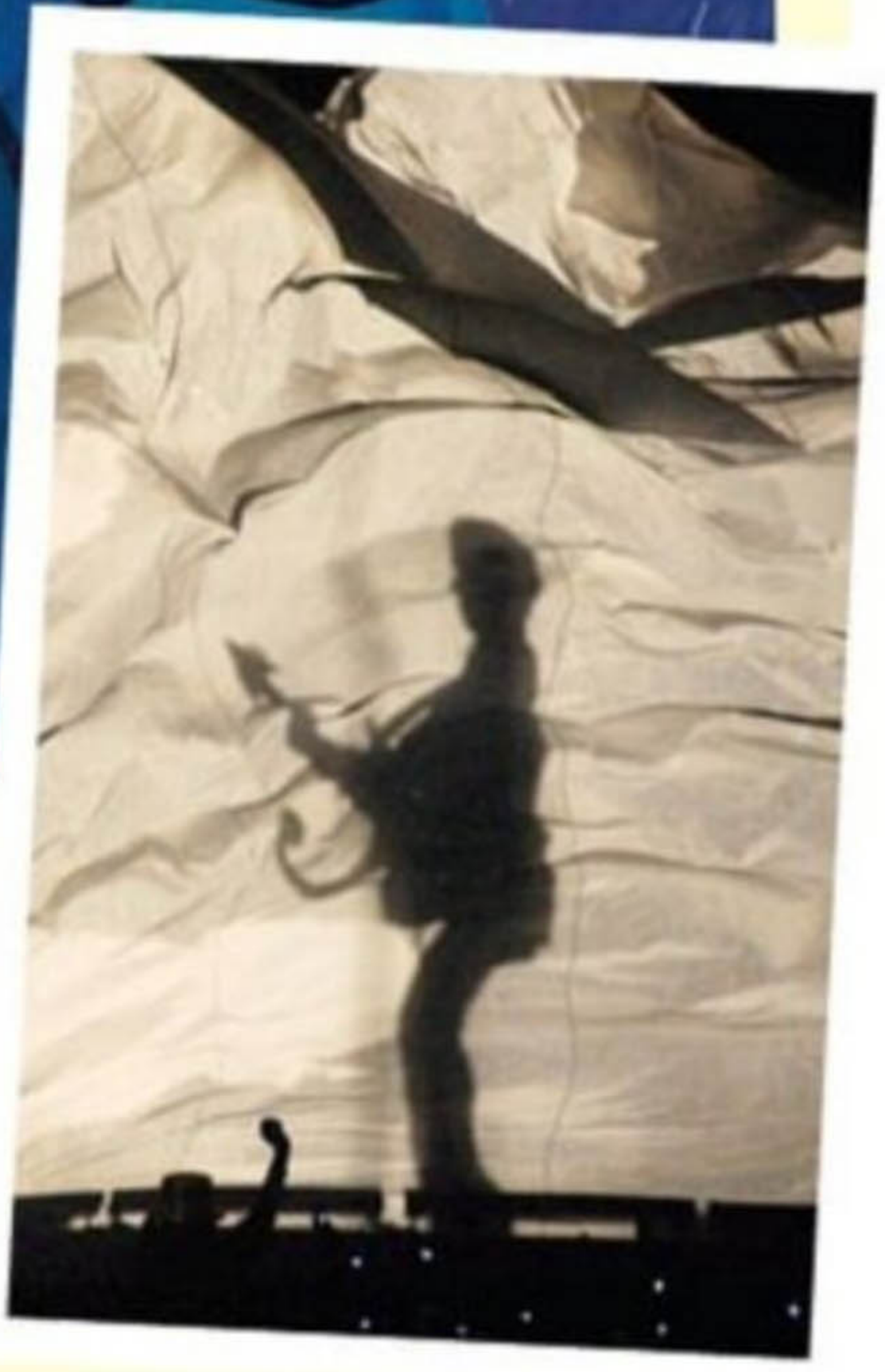
2 The Heidi Bowl *(1968)*
A thrilling finish to a Jets–Raiders game was cut short by a network premiere of *Heidi*, sparking a broadcast protocol overhaul.

3 Damar Hamlin goes into cardiac arrest during a game *(2023)*
The Bills safety nearly died during a *Monday Night Football* game, reminding viewers of football's very real health risks.

4 "I'm going to Disney World!" *(1987)*
After leading the Giants to Super Bowl XXI victory, game MVP Phil Simms vowed to party with Mickey, setting an ad-related trend.

5 The Helmet Catch *(2008)*
We still don't know how Giants WR David Tyree helped best the Pats with sticky fingers.

Best Super Bowl Halftime Shows



1 Prince *(2007)*
Prince's crowning achievement: singing "Purple Rain" in a Miami downpour that eclipsed the game itself (above).

2 Beyoncé and Destiny's Child *(2013)*
Beyoncé reunited with Destiny's Child alumni Kelly Rowland and Michelle Williams for a showstopping performance.

3 Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, 50 Cent, Mary J. Blige, Kendrick Lamar and Eminem *(2022)*
Instead of the usual pop stars and rockers, this halftime stage honored West Coast rap legends.

4 Michael Jackson *(1993)*
The King of Pop made the halftime show a must-watch event with his legendary performance.

5 U2 *(2002)*
Bono and U2 faced the challenge of performing for a grieving post-9/11 America and delivered. A scrolling of victims' names ran as they sang "Where the Streets Have No Name."

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There's no love lost between the greatest rivalries ever in the NFL

By Michael Eisen

Few programming options prompt Americans to sit in front of their TVs more reliably than the NFL. In 2024, the league claimed 72 of the top 100 broadcasts in the U.S. The most watched game of the season was a Thanksgiving Day contest between the Dallas Cowboys and the New York Giants—teams that combined to win 10 games, post a minus-260-point differential and were never serious playoff contenders.

But the Cowboys and Giants have been division foes for more than half a century, and few factors escalate viewership more than a traditional intense rivalry.

And these 10 represent the best of those clashes. They include division matchups, inter-conference opponents and antagonisms old and new.

PUBLIC

BILLS–CHIEFS

Since 2020, these two teams have been matched up nine times, including four in the postseason, two of them AFC championship games. Kansas City won all four playoff contests, including the conference title game last January. The Bills captured the last four regular season meetings. In other words, Josh Allen (left) hopes to best Patrick Mahomes (right) one day when it counts most.

SHAKE HANDS AND COME OUT SWINGING "It's a good, competitive relationship," Harbaugh (left) says of himself and Tomlin

RAVENS–STEELERS

These AFC North adversaries compete with uncommon ferocity. In 58 regular-season games since 1996, Pittsburgh leads 35–25 but has outscored Baltimore by only 1,146–1,126. Seven of those games were decided in overtime. They have also met in five postseason games, including the Ravens' wild-card victory last January. Pittsburgh has won eight of the last 10 regular-season showdowns, while Baltimore has taken their last two playoff games. Mike Tomlin of the Steelers (entering his 19th season) and John Harbaugh of the Ravens (18th) have squared off 38 times, the second-highest total between two head coaches in NFL history. Tomlin leads 21–16, including playoffs.

ENEMIES

ANY NFC EAST MATCHUP

The Giants first faced Washington in 1932 and Philadelphia in 1933. The Philadelphia–Washington rivalry kicked off in 1934. Those three teams had almost 30 years to build up a dislike for one another before Dallas joined the NFL in 1960. The Cowboys permanently became part of the other three teams' division a decade later and quickly became the rival the others loved to hate. Every NFC East game is like a showdown between neighbors who loathe each other. The familial fighting has resulted in no repeat division champions in 20 consecutive seasons, since the Eagles won four in a row from 2001 to 2004. Dallas and Philadelphia have alternated first-place finishes since 2021, with the Eagles winning last year. Washington last captured the division in 2020, the Giants in 2011. The NFC East is the only division in which all four current teams have won at least two Super Bowls.

EMBRACING THE RIVALRY Since 2020, the Eagles and Cowboys have split 10 games 5–5, with total margins being about 90 points.

BEARS–PACKERS

No rivalry matches this for historical significance. Since 1921, Chicago and Green Bay have met in 208 regular-season games, 18 more than the next nearest matchup (Bears–Detroit Lions). Green Bay leads the series, 107–95–6. Last year, the Packers beat the Bears by one point in Chicago and lost the season finale by two in Green Bay, ending their 11-game winning streak in the series. From 1921 to 1949, Hall of Famers George Halas (above right) of Chicago and Curly Lambeau of Green Bay were on opposite sidelines 49 times, the most matchups between two coaches in NFL history. Halas enjoyed a 30–16–3 advantage.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: KARA DURRETTE/GETTY IMAGES; ROBERT RIGER/GETTY IMAGES; MITCHELL LEFF/GETTY IMAGES; TIMOTHY T LUDWIG/GETTY IMAGES

PUBLIC ENEMIES

CHIEFS–RAIDERS

This rivalry was born of a strong mutual dislike in the AFL in 1960, and the enmity never subsided. It was fueled by the inflammatory words of football icons like Al Davis, Marty Schottenheimer and Marcus Allen, the Hall of Fame running back who, after 11 years in Oakland, famously—or infamously, depending on which side you're on—joined the Chiefs as a free agent in 1993. Allen said one of his primary reasons for switching sides was, "I get to play against the Raiders and Al Davis twice a year." In Allen's five seasons with the Chiefs, they were 9–1 vs. the Raiders. Kansas City is similarly dominant today with 12 victories in the last 14 meetings.

FALCONS-SAINTS

Atlanta and New Orleans are seldom near the top of the standings, perhaps one reason their rivalry has been especially nasty since they first met in 1967. Two last-second Atlanta wins in 1978 over the Saints—one with a Hail Mary—put the Falcons into the playoffs. Last year, their two-game split was decided by five total points, keeping the Saints' lead in the series 56–55.

JETS–PATRIOTS

Though they've played memorable games, the heat in this rivalry has been generated off the field. Hall of Fame coach Bill Parcells left New England after Super Bowl XXXI to join the Jets. Without ever coaching a game for them, future Hall of Famer Bill Belichick (inset) resigned from the Jets on January 4, 2000, and was soon hired for the same post in New England. On the field, the Pats defeated the Jets in 16 of the last 18 meetings, including 15 in a row from 2016 to 2023. With Tom Brady (above right) as his QB, Belichick seemed to enjoy beating the Jets more.

BROWNS–BENGALS

This rivalry is unique because Paul Brown was the cofounder and first head coach of each franchise (Cleveland in the All-America Football Conference in 1946 and Cincinnati in 1968). Located in opposite corners of Ohio, they have been battling for state supremacy in the same division since 1970. The Bengals swept both games last season to increase their series lead to 55–48. The intensity will certainly be elevated if the teams ever meet in the playoffs.

CHIEFS–EAGLES

Another newcomer to the top rivalries list. Despite residing in different conferences, they will face each other for the fifth-consecutive season in 2025. Kansas City and Philadelphia met in two of the last three Super Bowls, with each winning one. The Eagles shockingly led the Chiefs by 34 points before winning Super Bowl LIX on February 9, 40–22. Andy Reid leads *both* franchises in career coaching victories—140 with the Eagles from 1999 to 2012, and 161 with his current team, the Chiefs, from 2013 to 2024.

RAMS–49ERS

Here's a division dustup that has annually created bad blood since 1950. Each franchise has enjoyed periods of dominance against the other. But that doesn't discredit the narrative: From 2019 to their first meeting in 2023, the 49ers won nine of 10 games against Los Angeles. But the Rams' lone victory was in the 2021 NFC championship game on their way to winning Super Bowl LVI. That was long-delayed payback for San Francisco completing a three-game season sweep with a resounding 30–3 victory against the Rams in 1989. That 49ers team won its second-straight Super Bowl. Los Angeles has won the last three games in the series.

NOT A LOVE TAP The Rams' 20–17 win in the 2021 NFC title game shocked the 49ers, given their previous dominance.

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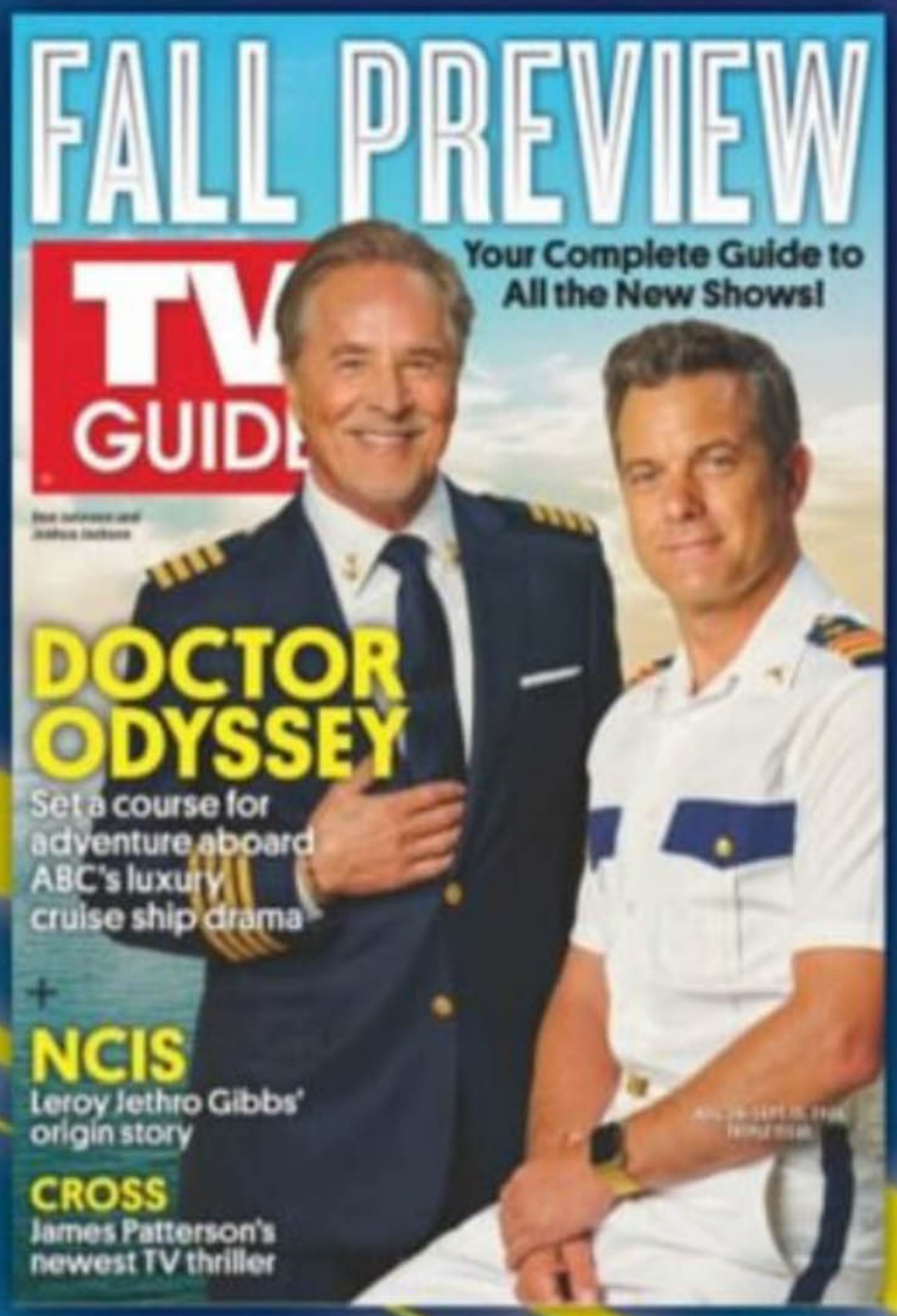
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